

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

THE EDUCATIONAL POLICIES OF THE
NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY GOVERNMENT
OF MANITOBA, 1969-1975

by

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wise reproduced without the author's written permission.

What I am saying is that the public school system is failing. In no sense am I saying that it should be abandoned. It needs, in my opinion, a good shaking up. Nowhere in our society is there such a state of oppression as I think exists inside the school room. I think that if this party accomplishes nothing else in government except this one thing of shaking up the school system, of re-evaluation, reformulating the functions of the educational system, of liberating the schools in short, I think if it accomplishes nothing else but this, it will have earned the right to govern.*

*

Manitoba, Legislative Assembly,
Debates and Proceedings, Cy Gonick,
19 May 1970, p. 2056.

ABSTRACT

After a lengthy period in opposition during which time the Manitoba NDP and its predecessor, the CCF, gave relatively little attention to education, the party, following its election in 1969, introduced a far reaching series of innovations in provincial education. The intended purpose of these innovations was to reform what the NDP perceived to be an elitist school system. To achieve this objective, the Schreyer government during the period from 1969 to 1975 pursued the policies of decentralizing administrative authority; democratizing the schools; promoting community involvement; encouraging experimentation; advancing greater equality of opportunity; and expanding minority language rights. These policies and the NDP's philosophy were consistent with "progressive" rather than "traditionalist" education.

The reactions on the part of the political opposition parties, professional groups, the press, and the general public to the NDP government's attempts at reformation must be described as unfavourable. While some support may have existed in the early stages, by 1974 disapproval was at times vehement. The government was accused of having "trivialized" education with its encouragement of "permissiveness." Critics maintained that academic standards had dropped because of a lack of emphasis on the "basics" or the "three Rs", and the overemphasis on students' social rather than intellectual development.

Although it is difficult to conclusively prove that academic standards did in fact decline because of the NDP's educational policies, it is the author's opinion that the "progressive" education promoted by

the government assisted least the children of the lower classes whose interests the Manitoba New Democratic Party government was avowedly dedicated to improving.

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The author accepts full responsibility for any omissions or shortcomings.

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CHAPTER I

EDUCATION IN MANITOBA

A BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The history of public school education in Manitoba began with the establishment of Manitoba as a province of Canada in 1870 with jurisdiction over education. Within its first year Manitoba's government passed legislation instituting a "dual system" of education wherein publicly supported separate, denominational schools were founded for the French-Roman Catholic and English-Protestant groups in the province.¹ Under the dual system both groups enjoyed the right to instruct in their own languages, make regulations, certify teachers, set up curriculum, and maintain equal representation on a provincial Board of Education. With the increasing immigration of English speaking Protestants, however, the population balance shifted against the French Catholics and their educational privileges were gradually withdrawn. In 1873, for instance, the provision of equal provincial grants to the two groups came to an end; and two years later, the equality of representation on the Board of Education was set aside.² Meanwhile, the period from 1870 to 1890 also witnessed a widespread growth in elementary education; the beginnings of public secondary education; the founding of the University of Manitoba; the commencement of teacher training; more regular school inspections; and initiatives in special education for the handicapped. Religious rivalry was largely lacking during this

¹ Keith Wilson, "The Development of Education in Manitoba" (Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1967), p. 97.

² Ibid., p. 141.

period under the dual system.

By 1890 French Catholics comprised less than a third of the population and the English Protestants had a clear majority. According to one recent writer, there followed "an act of Orangemen determined to crush Catholicism."³ The Liberal government of Premier Thomas Greenway enacted legislation which abolished the dual system of separate schools and instituted in its place a system of non-denominational public schools. These were administered by local boards of trustees and the newly created Department of Education.⁴

In response, the French minority fought to regain the rights it believed had been guaranteed by Section ninety-three of the British North America Act and by Section twenty-two of the Manitoba Act of 1870.⁵ The "Manitoba School Question" eventually became a national issue as appeals to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London led to a ruling that Manitoba had the constitutional right to pass its 1890 legislation. French Manitobans then resorted to the Governor General-in-Council for remedial legislation to invoke the protective provisions of the BNA Act. The subsequent refusal of Manitoba's government to obey a federal order to restore the abrogated

³ Gerald Clark, Canada: The Uneasy Neighbour (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965; Canadian Best-Seller Library, 1967), p. 292.

⁴ Wilson, "Education in Manitoba," p. 199.

⁵ F. Henry Johnson, A Brief History of Canadian Education (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1968), p. 94.

rights of the French minority, however, forced the federal Conservative government of Sir Charles Tupper to take the issue to the nation in the election of 1896. The result was an electoral victory by the Liberal party led by Wilfrid Laurier with his "provincial rights" platform, and an indirect victory for the Manitoba legislature. The subsequent Laurier-Greenway agreement of 1897, which was later called a "compromise," left the non-sectarian school system intact but led to the amendment of The Public Schools Act.⁶ The Act was amended to include a clause which permitted ten or more French-speaking, or any non-English-speaking pupils, in a given school, to receive instruction in their mother tongue as well as in English. Despite the varied reactions to the compromise, the legislation of 1897 formally closed the language issue for the time being.

During the seven year period dominated by the Manitoba School Question, significant administrative developments took place in education. Notably, under the authority of the Department of Education an Advisory Board, created in 1890, determined curriculum, authorized textbooks and distributed provincial grants to local school boards.

But problems arose from the Laurier-Greenway compromise. The bilingual instruction it permitted such immigrant groups as the Mennonites, Ukrainians and Poles drew increasing criticism from

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Jim Small, Robert Bryce, and Gordon McIntosh, "A Review of Some Recent Developments in Education on the Prairies," in The Failure of Educational Reform in Canada, ed. Douglas Myers (Toronto: McClelland and Stuart, 1973), p. 182.

English speaking Protestants who wanted schools to promote assimilation. To curtail what has been termed "a near riot in non-English education," the Liberal government of T.C. Norris⁷ in 1916 ended bilingual instruction. At the same time, it made school attendance compulsory for all children between the ages of five and fourteen, put greater emphasis on technical education, initiated systematic medical examinations of students, and took⁸ a few hesitant steps toward school district consolidation.

After these reforms, however, there followed a period, covering almost forty years, that has been called one of "educational stagnation."⁹ From 1921 to 1928, for instance, despite an increase of fifteen thousand students in the public schools, the provincial appropriation for education remained constant and declined in¹⁰ relation to the total budget. In fact, 104 schools were closed in 1923 for lack of funds and the government sought even further economies. During the depression of the 1930s fiscal restraint continued. Only during and after the Second World War was the earlier commitment to progress to some degree restored. Nonetheless, by 1959 school facilities had become almost universally accessible and

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Ibid.

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W.L. Morton, Manitoba: A History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957; reprint 2d ed., Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 350; Wilson, "Education in Manitoba," p. 317.

9

Wilson, "Education in Manitoba," p. 329.

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David Munroe, The Organization and Administration of Education In Canada (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1974), p. 99.

teacher training was well established in Winnipeg and Brandon. On the negative side, however, many rural schools remained inadequately financed, teacher recruitment was inadequate, and for these and other reasons, the provincial system fell far short of meeting the democratic goal of equality of educational opportunity. The reluctance of successive provincial governments to initiate extensive educational reforms, according to one historian, was due to their "rural conservatism":

Rural apathy and rural conservatism tended to retard educational progress not only in the rural areas, but also in the Province as a whole; for rural attitudes dominated the provincial legislature and directly influenced educational legislation. The failure of the movements towards consolidation meant, in effect, that educational progress was confined largely to the urban areas.¹¹

This pattern began to change in 1957 when the Liberal-Progressive government headed by Douglas Campbell appointed a Royal Commission to examine all aspects of Manitoba's school system. Under the chairmanship of Dr. R.O. MacFarlane, a professor of history at the University of Manitoba, the Commission conducted hearings across the province and in 1958 issued an interim report. The report recommended, amongst other things, substantial increases in provincial grants related to teacher qualifications, consolidation and improvement of secondary schools and an equalization levy to assist poorer school divisions.¹²

In the same year, a new Progressive Conservative government headed by Duff Roblin was elected and it moved swiftly to implement these recommendations. Between 1959 and 1969, the number of school

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Wilson, "Education in Manitoba," p. 426.

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Manitoba, Interim Report, Manitoba Royal Commission on Education, (1958), pp. 38, 45, 89, cited by Wilson, "Education in Manitoba," p. 339.

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districts was reduced from 1,777 to forty-one. These new "unitary divisions" unlike their predecessors were responsible for both elementary and secondary education. Accompanying this consolidation was an extensive school construction program designed to accommodate the increasing school enrolment which from 1959 to 1969 rose by more than 30 percent to a total of 239,834 public school students.¹⁴ The increase in student enrolment was particularly dramatic at the secondary level. This was primarily due to the post-war "baby boom", "stay in school" campaigns and the raising of the school attendance age to sixteen.¹⁵

With the increase in government grants for teachers' salaries the status of the profession improved. Better salary scales and working conditions induced more people, particularly men, into teacher training programs and encouraged existing teachers to improve their qualifications. In 1962 the government, desirous of reducing the number of poorly qualified "permit" teachers, made grade twelve standing the minimum entrance requirement to Teachers' College.¹⁶ It also offered attractive bursaries, loans, and scholarships, and launched a teacher recruitment campaign in other countries, notably the United Kingdom.¹⁷ Partly as a

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Manitoba, Department of Education, Annual Report 1959-60 (Winnipeg: Queen's Printer, 1960), p. 21 (hereafter cited as Manitoba, Annual Report); Idem, Annual Report 1962-63, p. 18; Idem, Annual Report 1968-69, p. 11.

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Idem, Annual Report 1958-59, p. 10; Idem, Annual Report 1969-70, p. 108.

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Idem, Annual Report 1964-65, p. 19; Idem, Annual Report 1963-64, p. 27.

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Idem, Annual Report 1961-62, p. 14.

17

Idem, Annual Report 1967-68, p. 31.

result of these policies, over the period from 1958 to 1964, the total number of teachers rose by almost 30 percent while the number holding university degrees increased by 88 percent.¹⁸

During the decade from 1959 to 1969 there were also major curriculum changes. The old program of studies for secondary schools with its "General," "High School Leaving" and "Vocational" streams, was replaced by a broader program offering a "University Entrance Course," a "General Course," a "Business Education Course," an "Industrial Course" and an "Occupational Entrance Course."¹⁹ This provided more business and vocational training for students not continuing to university. In addition, beginning in the mid-sixties, the government began to reappraise traditional teaching methods and to consider introducing more flexibility in the form of wider subject and option choices for secondary students.

Attempts to respond to the problems of education were not always free of political overtones. The Manitoba School Question was briefly revived as a consequence of the MacFarlane Commission's recommendation that public aid be restored to parochial schools. During 1963 and 1964 this issue drew sufficient controversy for Premier Roblin to consider some form of action. His compromise solution was "shared-services" legislation in 1965 through which public school boards could

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Idem, Annual Report 1963-64, p. 27.

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Manitoba, Department of Education, Administrative Handbook Grades 9-12 1968-69, pp. 2-3.

enter into agreements with private schools for the provision of trans-
 portation and various other services and facilities at no cost.²⁰

Two years later, the government allowed French as a language of
 instruction for as much as half of each school day.²¹

By 1969 many problems which had long beset Manitoba's school system appeared to have been resolved. In fact, the removal of some of the system's structural deficiencies permitted and facilitated the growing notion of "equality of opportunity for all" which accompanied the dynamic growth of mass education in the sixties. Thus, the critical issues in education during this period increasingly became the provision of courses to serve individual differences and to heighten student motivation. By consolidating school districts and by replacing small schools with larger, better equipped "regional" schools the government enabled school divisions to introduce more diverse programs ostensibly to meet the various needs of the enlarged school population. Slowly the broad range of curriculum shifted from subject oriented to interest oriented learning.²² It was in this changing philosophical context that Manitoba's first New Democratic Party government took office in 1969.

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Manitoba, Legislative Assembly, Debates and Proceedings, 10 May 1965, p. 2571 (hereafter cited as Manitoba, Debates).

21

Ibid., 20 March 1967, p. 1821.

22

Canadian Education Association, Education in Transition: A Capsule View 1960 to 1975 (Toronto: CEA, 1975), pp. 18-20.

CHAPTER II

NDP EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY PRIOR TO 1969

Prior to 1969 the Manitoba New Democratic Party did not possess a well developed educational philosophy. During the period from its founding convention in 1961, when it replaced the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), the party was primarily concerned with the achievement of equality of educational opportunity for the benefit of the lower classes. This was expanded after 1965 by related concerns.

Since education fell under provincial jurisdiction, educational matters were not dealt with in specific terms in the "Regina Manifesto" adopted at the CCF's First National Convention in 1933.¹ Nonetheless, because many CCF spokesmen both in the federal parliament and provincial legislatures were teachers by profession, the educational policies of the CCF historically reflected the belief that education was one of the major roads to a better society.² In this regard, equality of educational opportunity was considered a prerequisite to the social mobility necessary for every individual to achieve the position in society appropriate to his ability and industry. A fairly typical statement, at its Seventh National Convention in 1942, expressed this view:

Free education is the mainspring of democracy. Full equality of opportunity must be provided in all parts of the Dominion to prepare young Canadians to assume their rights and responsibilities of democratic citizenship. This objective requires Dominion scholarships and generous Dominion Government grants to provinces for technical and general education, for adult education....³

¹ David Lewis and Frank Scott, Make This Your Canada (Toronto: Central Canada Publishing, 1943), App., pp.2-6.

² Dean E. McHenry, The Third Force In Canada (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), p. 280.

³ Lewis and Scott, Your Canada, p. 212.

Three years later, the party's platform for the 1945 election advocated that the purpose of Canada's educational system should be to develop the natural capacities of each individual and to provide those with special abilities every opportunity to continue their vocational or academic studies, through school and university, at public expense.⁴ Another party statement at about this time recommended more curriculum flexibility; provision of medical, dental and nutritional services in schools; more responsiveness to local and parental concerns; and a greater emphasis on moral values.⁵

The transformation in 1961 from the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation to the New Democratic Party at both the federal and provincial levels did not generate significant changes in policy with respect to education. Annual NDP conventions in Manitoba generally affirmed traditional CCF proposals: free education for all; greater curricular flexibility; improved vocational and adult education facilities; shifting the cost of education away from municipal taxes; and increased community use of schools.⁶

Beyond this, NDP spokesmen in Manitoba's legislature made statements which illustrated the party's widening scope of concern regarding education. Edward Schreyer, MLA for Brokenhead constituency,

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D. Owen Carrigan, Canadian Party Platforms 1867-1968 (Toronto: Copp Clark Publishing, 1968), p. 149.

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Joseph W. Noseworthy, "A Program for Education," in Planning for Freedom; Sixteen Lectures on the CCF, Its Policies and Program (Toronto: Ontario CCF, 1944), p. 136.

6

Cf., Stanley Knowles, The New Party (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961), Addendum, p. 22; Manitoba New Democratic Party, Policies of the NDP (n.p., [1976]).

announced in 1965 that for seven months a small group of NDP members had been meeting and that they had developed a program of three educational goals.⁷ The first was the making of post-secondary education "universally available" primarily by way of increased bursaries and loans. In supporting this earlier, Party Leader Russ Paulley characterized Conservative aid for students as "peanuts" and claimed that in general, only the children of well-to-do parents could attend university.⁸ Sidney Green, MLA for Inkster constituency, went further to argue that the poor, by virtue of their taxes, subsidized the education of the rich by financing universities which were inaccessible to them.⁹ The second educational goal was to make high schools more "comprehensive" with more course alternatives and options. The third goal was the introduction of "continuing education programs" as a preparation for "leisure" by adapting high schools to become "community center schools" or "community schools" where local craftsmen or professionals could conduct classes, and where local residents could hold community activities and recreational programs. According to Schreyer, education should prepare students and citizens for the increasing leisure

⁷ Manitoba, Debates, 16 March 1965, pp. 659-62.

⁸ Ibid., Russ Paulley MLA for Transcona, 21 February 1964, p. 361.

⁹ Ibid., 7 April 1969, p. 1019.

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time that modern technology was creating.

Statements by other party members supported and complemented these goals. Lemuel Harris, MLA for Logan constituency, argued in favour of extending the curricular decision-making role of teachers.¹¹ The MLA for Elmwood, Russell Doern, maintained that students should also have greater influence in the decision-making process.¹² As well, for the higher grades he advocated placing more importance upon daily work and individualized instruction and less importance upon formal examinations. For the lower grades, particularly in low-income areas, Doern urged the use of "Montessori methods by which children are allowed to, in effect, do what they want; they choose their activities, they work on them as long as they want and so the element of freedom and the element of inner direction is [sic] very strong."¹³ Art Wright, the MLA for Seven Oaks, meanwhile held that schools should give more consideration to each pupil's background and

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Ibid., 16 March 1965, pp. 665-66.

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Ibid., 11 March 1966, pp. 860-61.

12

Ibid., 18 April 1969, p. 1422.

13

Ibid., 13 May 1968, p. 1928. The "Montessori System" was created by Maria Montessori (1870-1952), an Italian educator, who believed that by providing young children with certain exact yet simple didactic materials they could learn to teach themselves after an initial demonstration. She also believed that learning abilities regarding various skills were directly related to chronological age and that this sequence should determine the general pattern for instruction.

emotional makeup.¹⁴ Another member, Saul Miller, who in 1966 succeeded Wright, declared that education should be "sensitive to the diversity of the student, to his ability, [and] to his aspirations";¹⁵ later he added: "literacy is not enough any more; we've just simply got to bring every child to the maximum of his potential."¹⁶

Thus the Manitoba NDP through the 1960s gradually broadened the scope of the CCF's principal concern for extending educational opportunity by government assistance for the poor. By 1969 the party was also advocating the establishment of community centred schools, curricular flexibility, administrative decentralization and a greater sensitivity to individual student interests and presumed needs.

14 Ibid., 10 March 1966, p. 823.

15 Ibid., 21 April 1967, p. 2817.

16 Ibid., 3 April 1969, p. 997.

CHAPTER III

NDP EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY 1969-75

In the Manitoba provincial election held on 25 June 1969, the NDP, led by Edward Schreyer, unexpectedly defeated the Progressive Conservative government headed by Walter Weir. Some two weeks later Weir resigned and the new Schreyer administration was sworn in. The new government was unusual in at least two respects. It was the first avowedly social-democratic government in Manitoba history; and to a greater extent than ever before, its members were drawn from the field of education. Schreyer himself was a former high school teacher and university lecturer; and out of the total of twenty-eight NDP members elected, ten, or over a third, were teachers or professors.¹ Given the preponderance of educators in the NDP caucus and cabinet, it was not surprising that the new government gave a high priority to what it considered to be educational reform.

It would perhaps be an error to ascribe to this NDP government a single, coherent philosophy of education; for like every political group it included members from a variety of backgrounds who likely held diverse views on education as on other matters. On rare occasions this difference of opinion revealed itself in Manitoba's legislature. In general, however, during the period from 1969 to 1975, cabinet ministers as well as backbenchers expressed certain recurrent

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Manitoba, Debates, Doern, 27 August 1969, p. 238.

concerns. These usually took the form of criticisms of the "old" school system and proposals for change. To a degree, these in conjunction with other party and government statements comprised a fairly consistent perspective, if not a fully developed and coherent philosophy.

During the Manitoba NDP's first five and one-half years in power the new government often stated its educational goals in vague or platitudinous terms:

1. Equality of educational opportunity whereby the school system shall provide Manitobans with the opportunity for achievement, and the opportunity to develop distinct and diverse talents and skills;

2. A comprehensive system of education whereby the public system in Manitoba shall provide a program to enrich individual life and contribute to the cohesion and vitality of a democratic and pluralistic society;

3. A system for the individual and society whereby the school system will direct itself to the provision of educational alternatives which contribute to the fullest development of the individual and which meet the needs of our society;

4. A school system responsive to community needs whereby the school interacts with and responds to the community in which it is located.²

The distinct beliefs from which these four broad goals sprang, however, are less obscure. First, the NDP placed great emphasis upon the notion of rapid technological and social change which obliged schools to "prepare students for the future" more than they had in the past. This concern to make education "relevant" was particularly evident until 1974. Both NDP Ministers of Education for the period

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Manitoba, Debates, Ben Hanuschak MLA for Burrows, 8 May 1974, p. 3246; see also, Manitoba, Department of Education, A Reference Paper on Selected Topics in Education, 1973, pp. 9-19.

1969 to 1975 voiced firm belief in the need to respond to rapid change.

In 1971, Saul Miller, a former businessman, municipal mayor and Minister of Education from 1969 to 1971, stated:

We must be prepared to break from the conventional mould and transform our educational system through a process of system wide reform to humanistic objectives which will enhance human dignity and self-confidence in a society which is marked by continuous change....³

One year later, Miller's successor, Ben Hanuschak, a former teacher and Minister of Education from 1971 to 1976, stated that :

Naturally the first fact that we must face is the continuing accelerating rate of change itself. It is well known that science and the technologies have advanced far beyond the comprehension of most....⁴

According to the NDP, modern societies were experiencing an "information explosion" wherein an unprecedented production of new information and knowledge necessitated the modification of the educational process.⁵

In the past, the school system was the predominant source of knowledge; education was designated as the territory of the schools and students were to remain in school until they finished learning. But learning, according to the NDP, did not end with high school, college or university. It was a life long process. Consequently,

curriculum may no longer be regarded as a fixed body of content presented according to some predetermined pattern, but rather as a variety of experiences geared more specifically to individual student interests... for students who will live out much of their lives in the 21st century.⁶

³ Manitoba, Debates, 7 June 71, p. 1596.

⁴ Ibid., 2 June 72, p. 2618.

⁵ Manitoba, Reference Paper, p. 6.

⁶ Manitoba, Debates, Miller, 15 April 1970, p. 957.

Moreover, this knowledge and information, being now easily accessible through the media, diminished the importance of schools as a source of learning. More than ever before, students as well as adults would gain most of their education from their surroundings, their community and their life experiences. Schools would have to adapt accordingly:

There is every reason to believe that society will transfer its focus from the production of goods to the development of the individual. Thus, the school as the only public building available in every community may well become the centre for the distribution of an entire spectrum of services - social, recreational and educational. The reality of leisure and the increasing complexity of modern life will force an increasing emphasis on adult education. The school building must be a multi-use unit, with the teaching of children only one use of the building.⁷

This view also expected, and welcomed, a redistribution of decision-making authority in the school system. The Schreyer administration intended that the residents of a school area should be involved in the development and operation of regular academic and community programs.

The NDP also maintained that the "old" school system, designed by and for the "middle class," did not do justice to the lower economic classes or minority groups in Manitoba.⁸ In the legislature, Hanuschak argued that since 1916, when school attendance was made compulsory and English was made the sole language of instruction, the schools were meant to serve an assimilative function.

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Manitoba, Reference Paper, p. 27.

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The terms "middle class," "lower class," etc., although frequently used by the NDP, were never specifically defined and it is likely that nuances of meaning varied from one source or context to another. For example, see Manitoba, Debates, Ian Turnbull, MLA for Osborne, 19 June 1970, p. 3038.

While providing what were considered to be necessary skills and knowledge, the schools were also expected to introduce students to the English-Canadian culture. During the same time, educational administrators were resolute about what knowledge or skills were supposedly most necessary and erected, accordingly, a school system which was characterized by tight controls over textbooks, curricula, and teachers, and enforced by a system of external examinations and provincial inspectors. The school system essentially aimed at preparing a minority of pupils for university while giving the rest a general education consisting of basic skills.⁹ In carrying out this policy of promoting uniformity through standardization, the schools bypassed students who did not meet their rigid academic standards.¹⁰ Inevitably, whatever its merits, this system had one major defect: it promoted a classbound "elitist society."¹¹ For the most part, those students who reached university were predominantly from middle and upper socio-economic status homes.

According to Hanuschak, the system's external controls, thought to be necessary in the past to counteract the lack of qualified teachers, were now cumbersome since teachers had improved. Also students were forced into a particular mould regardless of their background, interests, or capacity. The external Departmental examinations emphasized only

⁹ Manitoba, Debates, Hanuschak, 7 April 1975, p. 996.

¹⁰ Manitoba, Reference Paper, p. 20.

¹¹ Manitoba, Debates, Hanuschak, 10 May 1974, p. 3368.

the recall of factual information and essay writing. These examinations and periodic visits by Departmental inspectors measured the performance of both teachers and students. This system, according to the analysis of NDP critics, was simple, authoritarian, outmoded and unfair.¹² Miller stated in 1970 that "despite a free primary and secondary educational system, not all social classes of our young people profit co-equally...."¹³ Equality of opportunity meant more than the provision of equal dollar education for all students, and more than the notion that all students should leave the school system with the same knowledge. The concept of equity in educational opportunity recognized that students differed with respect to their social, cultural and economic backgrounds as well as their intellectual and psychological capacities for learning. Therefore, differing levels of resources and effort had to be expended in order to provide truly equal educational opportunities for children with diverse needs. Manitoba's educational system should enable all children, regardless of social class, to develop to their fullest potential:

Education is a very closely tied-in aspect of social development and support of students should be fostered on the same basis as other aspects of social development, that is, to be geared towards aiding the fulfillment of the individuals in our society. Support to the individual in need who possesses the capacity and the desire to better himself through education should not be viewed as attaching a stigma to that individual, but rather as a duty upon government....¹⁴

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Ibid., 7 April 1975, p. 996.

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Ibid., 15 April 1970, p. 955.

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Manitoba, Debates, Miller, 15 April 1970, p. 956.