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GEORGE D. PERRY

“The Grand Regulator”: State Schooling and the Normal-School Idea in Nova Scotia, 1838-1855

FEW WOULD DISPUTE THAT TEACHING IS “such a natural and spontaneous form of human activity that its origins are lost in pre-history”.¹ The training of teachers, in contrast, is a contrived activity whose origins are as recent as the 19th century. That teachers required training at all was still a new idea when Nova Scotia opened its first normal school in 1855. The principal of that school, the Scottish-born Presbyterian clergyman Alexander Forrester, could remember when this “novel undertaking” was ridiculed by even the most intelligent and experienced educationists”. Remarkably, “[N]o one seemed to dream of the necessity of any preparatory professional qualifications on the part of the teacher”.² Even in Forrester’s time, many Nova Scotians viewed state-supported teacher training with scepticism. Unconvinced of its value and distrustful of its sponsors’ motivation, legislators had blocked the passage of the province’s first Normal School Bill in 1851. The movement to establish a government institution for the training of common-school teachers nevertheless prevailed in Nova Scotia as it did elsewhere. Efforts made over two decades by a small circle of Reform politicians and educationists finally succeeded in achieving the passage of the second Normal School Bill in 1854. This article describes their joint enterprise, in particular the merging of their political and pedagogical concerns. It traces the origins of the normal-school idea in Nova Scotia, showing how a once-ridiculed and unfamiliar idea came to win legislative approval between 1838 and 1855. The normal-school victory is more significant, however, for what was not won in 1855; the victory fell far short of achieving a system of “national education” for Nova Scotia, the goal that mattered most to the normal-school promoters.

The unqualified assertion by one historian that “it had long been obvious that a system of adequate teacher training [in Nova Scotia] was essential . . .” is not helpful in understanding the relationship between teacher training and the creation of a provincial system of education.³ It assumes a general support for training from the beginning, and fails to take into account the suspicion and resistance still prevalent in

- 1 Herbert M. Kliebard, “The Question in Teacher Education”, in Donald J. McCarthy, ed., *New Perspectives on Teacher Education* (San Francisco, 1973), p. 9.
- 2 Alexander Forrester, *The Teacher’s Text-Book* (Halifax, 1867), p. 556. For Forrester’s background as a Presbyterian clergyman and educationist, see Judith Fingard, “Alexander Forrester”, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography [DCB], Vol. IX* (Toronto, 1976), pp. 270-3.
- 3 William B. Hamilton, “Society and Schools in Nova Scotia”, in J. Donald Wilson, Robert M. Stamp and Louis-Philippe Audet, eds., *Canadian Education: A History* (Scarborough, 1970), p. 100.

George D. Perry, ““The Grand Regulator”: State Schooling and the Normal-School Idea in Nova Scotia, 1838-1855”, *Acadiensis*, XXXII, 2 (Spring 2003), pp. 60-83.

the 1850s. The assertion also obscures the purpose of state-sponsored training and accepts at face value official efforts that attempted to make it “essential”. While a chronic shortage of teachers existed and continued for a century or more, a need for training cannot be uncritically assumed. It was not obvious to many people that teachers needed to be trained in the first place.⁴ Teaching and training have not always been yoked together. A grammar school education was considered an adequate preparation for school teaching until well into the second half of the 19th century.⁵ This is reason enough to ask whether the original motivation for training was as straightforward and as pedagogically pure as has been suggested.

No one was troubled that the sons and daughters of the rich were tutored by the untrained, by tutors whose general education was the main consideration. Unlike the poor who needed guidance and ‘improvement’, the rich also had grammar schools and could look after themselves. Working people’s children presented a different challenge in the minds of educationists; somehow teacher training seemed more appropriate when it came to providing a “sound popular education”. A new ‘science’ of teaching, its principles and ‘methods’ based on the nature of the child, had recently arrived in the province and had found adherents in the province’s schools for the poor.⁶ The new pedagogy became popular among normal-school promoters because it appeared to solve the problem of educational provision for the “poorer classes”. Nova Scotia was not different in this respect from Upper Canada where educationists had also promoted a public school system expressly for the children of the poor.⁷

It is necessary therefore to begin the story of teacher training at a point when some strangeness was still attached to the notion. Otherwise, a faulty historical memory lends to Principal Forrester’s ‘pedagogy’ and his institution a political innocence and legitimacy it never enjoyed in his lifetime; the political and social origins of training are thereby lost and government supervision of all aspects of school teaching is taken for granted. Normal schools were not created merely to produce competent teachers; their broader mandate of social ‘improvement’ pointed to the need for the state to

4 Nova Scotia was not unique in this regard. In Massachusetts in the 1830s and 1840s, “school reformers had to convince doubting people that teachers needed to be trained”. See Jurgen Herbst, *And Sadly Teach: Teacher Education and Professionalization in American Culture* (Madison, 1989), p. 21.

5 Most Americans before 1865 also believed that grammar schools and academies adequately prepared teachers. See C.A. Richardson, Hélène Brûlé, and Harold E. Snyder, *The Education of Teachers in England, France and the United States* (UNESCO, 1953), p. 228. In Nova Scotia until 1927, the Minimum Professional Qualification (MPQ) allowed teachers to secure a licence through a set of written examinations without any training. Over 40 per cent of the province’s teachers were still untrained in 1927. Licences issued between 1927 and 30 August 1930, when training first became a pre-requisite, were temporary and not intended to be valid after that date. Temporary and permissive licences, however, continued to be issued for many years after 1930. See the *Journal of Education* (January 1931), pp. 9-10.

6 Modern pedagogy for Forrester began early in the 19th-century with the emergence of “a science of education”: “In reducing education . . . to a science all we have to do is classify or arrange, in systematic order, the leading features of the child’s nature”. Forrester credited Pestalozzi with the first practical pedagogy, that is, one based on an understanding of the child’s nature. See Forrester, *The Teacher’s Text-Book*, p. 100.

7 See Susan E. Houston, “Politics, Schools, and Social Change in Upper Canada”, in Michael B. Katz and Paul H. Mattingly, eds., *Education and Social Change: Themes from Ontario’s Past* (New York, 1975), pp. 41-5.

establish a centralized system of education. As Forrester insisted, wherever the education of the people became “a matter of national concern”, a national system of education was established; and wherever education achieved “a truly national aspect”, normal schools were the “only effectual way”. The interests of any ‘system’ of education depended on the predictable and controlled behaviour of teachers: “Too much stress cannot be laid on system in the school. It constitutes the grand regulator of the teacher”.⁸ A proper training system would render “the peculiarities of each individual subservient to the general good”.⁹ This applied equally to the teacher and the taught; both were to be trained and reformed in accordance with the state’s priorities. Once familiar with the “general good” the people would respect the liberties of others and see the importance of social order.¹⁰ The systemization of education promised orderliness and discipline, unlikely consequences of unregulated social change. In Nova Scotia, a normal school would help to overcome what Forrester called the “strife and division” that prevented the colony from matching the material progress of Canada and New England. While some might question whether normal school intentions can accurately be characterized as indoctrination or even ‘social formation’, it is undeniable that Forrester was proposing the inculcation of state-sanctioned social values among teachers (and their pupils).

Teachers trained in the prescribed way in a provincial normal school could reach, Forrester claimed, “the very substratum of society”, energize the people and re-direct their mean lives towards a prosperous future.¹¹ Teachers were to serve as government agents promoting “public morality” and provincial prosperity.¹² Forrester’s vision of the teacher as a “living agent” exemplifies what Bruce Curtis has described as the ‘educational state’, a state in which the ruling classes, made increasingly nervous by social change, attempted to impose a centralized education system to contain social conflict.¹³ The attempt in Nova Scotia at this juncture, however, was feeble. Although Forrester, a professional educator, served concurrently as the Normal School’s first principal between 1855 and 1869, and as provincial superintendent from 1855 until his dismissal in 1864, his professional goals of moral reform and educational centralization were, in the end, hindered by his own limited influence over education

8 Alexander Forrester, *The Object, Benefits and History of Normal Schools* (Halifax, 1855), p. 5 and Forrester, *The Teacher’s Text-Book*, p. 8. An anonymous *Acadiensis* reviewer must be thanked for suggesting a title based on Forrester’s high-flown language.

9 Forrester, *The Teacher’s Text Book*, p. 318.

10 *Inaugural Services. Opening of the Provincial Normal School*, Truro, N.S. (Halifax: 1856), p. 6.

11 *Inaugural Services*, p. 7. Alison Prentice’s description of Egerton Ryerson’s view of government in Canada West as “an almost miraculous, life-giving force, which, like the sun, could bestow endless energy on the people” fits the vision held by Nova Scotia’s normal-school founders equally well. See Alison Prentice, “The Public Instructor: Ryerson and the Role of Public School Administrator”, in Neil McDonald and Alf Chaiton, eds., *Egerton Ryerson and His Times* (Toronto, 1978), p. 132.

12 For Forrester’s understanding of “public morality” as a necessary condition for “a nation’s prosperity”, see his *Teacher’s Text-Book*, p. 30.

13 Bruce Curtis, *Building the Educational State: Canada West, 1836-1871* (London, Ont., 1988), pp. 13-9. Curtis’s perspectives on the history of education in Canada West have gone largely unexplored in Nova Scotia historiography. Notable exceptions include B. Anne Wood, “Pictou Academy: Promoting ‘Schooled Subjectivities’ in 19th-Century Nova Scotia”, *Acadiensis*, XXVIII, 2 (Spring 1999), pp. 41-57, and Robert Lanning, “Awakening a Demand for Schooling: Educational Inspection’s Impact on Rural Nova Scotia, 1855-74”, *Historical Studies in Education/Revue d’histoire de l’éducation* 12, 1 & 2 (2000), pp. 129-42.

policy. Indeed, Forrester's extravagant claims for the benefits of a normal school were shaped more by his ministerial work in the Scottish city of Paisley and by the austere methods of the Glasgow Normal School than they were by his understanding of Nova Scotia.¹⁴ His ideas made little if any impact on the Normal School Bill of 1854. Forrester's reputation, however, was another story. His official presence without doubt raised the temperature of what he himself called the "over-heated vehemence on both sides" of the sectarian struggle over the funding of denominational schools and colleges.¹⁵ Judith Fingard describes why Forrester became a target for critics of public school reform:

As an ordained member of the highly energetic and numerically predominant Presbyterian Church in Nova Scotia, he [Forrester] was bound to be accused of Protestant bigotry and Presbyterian partiality; moreover, as a 'foreigner' he could be reproached with ignorance of the province.¹⁶

Forrester's ultimate failure set him apart from his friend and House of Assembly ally William Young, whose cautious legislative support for a bare-bones normal school — where attendance would be voluntary — was guided by what was possible in provincial politics, and whose successful Normal School Bill in 1854 bore little resemblance to Forrester's vision of the 'educational state'. It should be noted as well that the normal-school idea in Nova Scotia pre-dated Forrester's arrival in the colony in 1848. The province's Reform assemblymen had already been part of a broad international movement for more than ten years.¹⁷ The international research of the amateur educator and House of Assembly member George Renny Young, the younger brother of William, was exemplary and represented the fullest and most articulate Reform expression of the normal-school idea. As was the case with Forrester's ideas, however, George Young's agenda of moral and material reform, with its anti-democratic spirit and rhetoric not unlike Forrester's, found little legislative support either before or after Young's death in 1851.

Gendered arguments in support of unmarried women as teachers of young children were also a key element of the normal-school campaign in Nova Scotia. Men like William Dawson, Nova Scotia's first superintendent of schools, as well as Forrester, were quick to grasp how an apparent linkage between mothering and teaching

14 The term "normal", according to Forrester (and to his mentor and founder of the Glasgow Normal School, David Stow), signified "a fixed principle, or law or standard". This principle "must pervade the whole organization and management; all the branches taught must be in accordance with that one system". See Forrester, *The Teacher's Text-Book*, p. 8. See also David Stow, *The Training System, Moral Training School and Normal Seminary for Preparing School-Trainers and Governesses*, Tenth ed. (London, 1854), pp. 47, 26, 217, *passim*.

15 Alexander Forrester, *Duty of the Legislature of Nova Scotia with respect to Collegiate Education* (Halifax, 1852), p. 5.

16 Fingard, "Alexander Forrester", p. 272.

17 For a comparative international view of teacher training and its place in emerging state systems of education, see Pavla Miller, *Transformations of Patriarchy in the West, 1500-1900* (Bloomington, 1998), pp. 183-220. For the Toronto Normal School as "a product of an [international] training movement", see Alison Prentice, "Friendly Atoms in Chemistry": Women and Men at Normal School in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Toronto", in David Keane and Colin Read, eds., *Old Ontario. Essays in Honour of J.M.S. Careless* (Toronto, 1990), pp. 286-7.

matched their own pedagogical and political priorities.¹⁸ The simple presence of women in the classroom would “restrain rudeness and impropriety of every sort”, claimed Forrester. Women’s natural “position of subordination and dependence”, not to mention what were thought to be their intellectual limitations, best qualified them for infant and primary departments in Forrester’s view.¹⁹ The same thinking in 19th-century Ontario, Alison Prentice has observed, was the basis for “the emergence of the teacher as servant of the state”.²⁰

While the purpose and design of training in Nova Scotia matched in scope and detail plans in Canada West and elsewhere, the centralization of educational authority on which the grand design ultimately depended was far less advanced. Here it is argued that Nova Scotia’s distinctive economic, social and religious circumstances delayed — relative to the Ontario experience — the arrival of the ‘educational state’. With its scattered pockets of population and its slow growth, Nova Scotia contrasted with the fertile ground tilled by school promoters of the same period in Ontario. An “urban outlook” in Upper Canada, Susan Houston has written, “provided sufficient ground for a consensus favouring common-school promotion to secure bipartisan support for school legislation by 1850”.²¹ In Nova Scotia where material constraints, a fractious legislature, bitter religious divisions and local political autonomy thwarted the emergence of a provincial system of education, a consensus was much slower to emerge.²² “In Nova Scotia between 1850 and 1864”, Janet Guildford has written, “school promoters failed to attract a sufficiently large constituency to their cause”.²³ As a result, the Provincial Normal School, when it finally opened in 1855, was a weak institution without the resources and authority to fulfil its mission. The widely held perception that it was a Presbyterian institution headed by an ultra-Protestant clergyman also cost it and the fledgling education system dearly.

It would be another ten years before the province’s educational apparatus included a proper inspectorate and property taxation in support of public schooling and even longer before teacher training was regarded as “essential”. By 1864-5, senior education officers were, as Guildford has pointed out, still “powerless to assert their claims to professional control against the interference of political officials”.²⁴ At the same time the Normal School lost its right to confer teaching licences on graduates and struggled unsuccessfully for a monopoly over licensing.²⁵ Reform leaders Joseph

18 On the link made between mothering and teaching, see Carolyn Steedman, “‘The Mother Made Conscious’: The Historical Development of Primary School Pedagogy”, *History Workshop*, 20 (1985), pp. 149-63.

19 Forrester, *The Teacher’s Text-Book*, p. 566.

20 Alison Prentice, “From Household to School House: The Emergence of the Teacher as Servant of the State”, in Ruby Heap and Alison Prentice, eds., *Gender and Education in Ontario: An Historical Reader* (Toronto, 1991), pp. 25-48.

21 Houston, “Politics, Schools, and Social Change in Upper Canada”, p. 31.

22 For a discussion of Nova Scotia’s slow economic growth in this period, in contrast to Ontario’s expanding economy, see Julian Gwyn, *Excessive Expectations. Maritime Commerce and the Economic Development of Nova Scotia, 1760-1870* (Montreal & Kingston, 1998).

23 Janet Guildford, “Public School Reform and the Halifax Middle Class, 1850-1870”, (Ph.D. Dissertation, Dalhousie University, 1990), p. 103.

24 Janet Guildford, “‘Separate Spheres’: The Feminization of Public School Teaching in Nova Scotia, 1838-1880”, *Acadiensis*, XXII, 1 (Autumn 1992), p. 57

25 Guildford, “Separate Spheres”, p. 57.

Howe and William Young went as far as they could go in 1854 in overcoming the resistance of Nova Scotians who viewed increased regulation and inspection as threats to confessional and local autonomy.²⁶ In Canada West it was otherwise. By 1850, Curtis writes, “the right of official inspection as a condition of state finance was firmly established in the domain of public education”.²⁷ While the normal-school project would fail to achieve its most ambitious statist goals by 1855, the advent of state-sponsored training was nevertheless significant in marking the boundaries for what would eventually constitute teacher education.

By 1855 the normal-school idea already had a long history in Nova Scotia. Serious political discussion of training schoolmasters had begun in 1838. In that year, the Education Committee of the Nova Scotia legislature expressed “astonishment and delight” in their discovery of the Prussian system where the selection of schoolmasters came under close political scrutiny, where the choice was “rigidly regulated” and where all teachers were required to attend a state training school. The state’s role was decisive: “Seminaries [were] directed by law . . . to be formed in each district, the sole object of which [was] the education of schoolmasters”.²⁸ The intended result was a system in which teachers simultaneously served the educational ends of the state and held the trust of their pupils’ parents. The trained teacher would be “steadfast in his fidelity towards the state” and “friendly and sensible in his intercourse with the parents of his pupils and fellow citizens in general”.²⁹ Nova Scotia’s legislators immediately sensed the potential of state-trained teachers to serve as instruments of government policy. Nor were they alone, for the Prussian model exerted an enormous influence wherever governments were anxious about the behaviour of the people.³⁰ Prussia seemed to have solved through statecraft the educational and social problems that faced lawmakers in Nova Scotia in the middle decades of the 19th century. Here was a model of state educational intervention that held the possibility of encouraging moral and material progress and that provided the means for the state to extend its educational authority to the province’s hinterland.

The Education Committee, whose members included Joseph Howe, the Reform leader,³¹ and William Young, under whose government the new normal school would eventually be opened, were also sensitive to the fact that the impressive social and educational results achieved through the Prussian system of “moral police” owed much to the despotic power of the Prussian sovereign.³² Despite the committee’s

26 The Reformers and the campaign for a provincial education system lost one of their most effective supporters with the death of Herbert Huntington in 1851. On Huntington’s role in the 1840s, see A.A. MacKenzie, “Herbert Huntington”, *DCB*, VIII (Toronto, 1985), pp. 415-7.

27 Bruce Curtis, *True Government by Choice Men? Inspection, Education, and State Formation in Canada West* (Toronto, 1992), p. 193.

28 *Journal and Proceedings of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly [JHA]*, 1838, Appendix 72, p. 160.

29 *JHA*, 1839, Appendix 72, p. 160.

30 For the appeal of the Prussian (or Pietist) model in Western countries, see Miller, *Transformations of Patriarchy*, pp. 149-52.

31 For the origins of the Reform movement, and its identification with Joseph Howe, see J. Murray Beck, *Politics of Nova Scotia 1710-1896* (Tantallon, N.S., 1985), pp. 107-14; and his *Joseph Howe, Volume I, Conservative Reformer 1804-1848* (Kingston and Montreal, 1982), p. 317.

32 The Education Report of 1838 used “moral police” as a description of the Prussian education system. The notion of moral agency pervades Howe’s speeches of the time. Prussia of 1817, Howe said in

belief that the Prussian model was the most advanced system of elementary education in the world, its members were unconvinced that even “a humble imitation of its scope and efficiency” would be acceptable to “a free people” like the Nova Scotians; the committee conceded — correctly as it turned out — that even “a wise exercise of arbitrary power” would be met with resistance.³³ William Young, whose political skills doubtless had more to do with the eventual passage of the Normal School Bill than had his younger brother George’s detailed research on the theory and practice of normal schools, was likely aware that opponents in Massachusetts saw normal schools as a threat to local government and had accused supporters of trying to Prussianize education in that state.³⁴ Nonetheless, Joseph Howe encouraged members of the government to do their duty and to act “boldly”; members “should look to the ultimate benefit [of a Prussian-like system], and, in some degree, coerce the people; that was the duty the House owed them as their representatives”.³⁵ Such pronouncements, needless to say, were met with resistance. Public opinion against compulsory assessment and against a state-supported normal school would later focus on the coercive and arbitrary actions of the Reform government; opposition would be strong enough to sharply narrow the scope of the normal school bills in 1851 and 1854. In the event, Presbyterians would replace Prussians as the *bête noire* of groups and localities fearing the loss of control over their children’s education. Meanwhile it was left, in 1838, for the Education Committee to take the first step and make clear to the House of Assembly the dire consequences should the government fail to introduce “one uniform system” of education.³⁶ The campaign for a provincial normal school had begun.

Complaints over the unimproved character of teachers were frequent in the legislature in the 1830s and 1840s. Too many teachers, it was said, were “objectionable, either in a moral or intellectual way”.³⁷ Scattered rural communities where the “evil” of degraded and incompetent teachers was left untouched by either voluntary or legislative provision were especially troublesome.³⁸ The Central Board of Education’s first report in 1841 had stressed the need to check the “too frequent introduction of incapable and ignorant persons into the body of licensed teachers”. In the board’s view, “[T]he occupation of teacher [was] deserted too often by young men of talent who crowd[ed] into other professions”.³⁹ For Howe, an Education Committee

1841, was without “the moral machinery necessary for the proper management of her affairs”. See William Annand, ed., *The Speeches and Public Letters of the Hon. Joseph Howe*, vol. I (Halifax, 1858), p. 314. For less enthusiastic comments on the actual performance of Prussia’s schools, see Miller, *Transformation of Patriarchy*, pp. 186-7.

33 *JHA*, 1838, Appendix 72, p. 160.

34 Horace Mann referred to a “powerful attack” that “menaced Prussian despotism as the natural consequence of imitating Prussia in preparing teachers for schools”. Mann’s speech is included in *The First State Normal School in America; The Journals of Cyrus Peirce and Mary Swift*, Arthur O. Norton, “Introduction”, (Cambridge, MA., 1926), p. 264. On William Young, see J. Murray Beck, “William Young”, *DCB*, Vol. XI (Toronto, 1982), pp. 943-49.

35 Annand, *The Speeches and Public Letters of the Hon. Joseph Howe*, vol. I, p. 317.

36 *JHA*, 1838, Appendix 72, pp. 160-1.

37 *JHA*, 1836, Appendix 46, p. 87.

38 *JHA* 1832, Appendix 20, p. 36.

39 “First Annual Report of the Central Board of Education”, February 5, 1842, p. 4.

member since 1837, teachers were in “every way inadequate”. There was “no proper provision” for making the instructors of youth “respectable and respected”, the achievement that had so favourably disposed legislators towards the Prussian model of teacher selection.⁴⁰

The House of Assembly’s Education Committee had, in 1838, discussed the advantages of extending “one uniform system over the whole province” before backing away from proposing its means, compulsory assessment. It fell to the Central Board of Education to convince the public of the necessity for new taxation through statistical evidence that demonstrated the uneven quality of educational provision. George Young had written in 1842 that colonial legislatures were slow to appreciate the value of political economy and statistics, upon which “sound principles of legislation” were based. According to Young, statistics had the effect of changing abstract speculation to “settled rules and principles”.⁴¹ Before province-wide standards could be set, an “educational map” was required, one that would make clear “the relative as well as the absolute advancement or backwardness” of each county.⁴² The educational map, Nova Scotia’s equivalent to Scotland’s “moral statistics”, was the state’s way of demonstrating and defining the exact measure of “ignorance” across the land.⁴³ Social mapping and inspection, as Curtis has pointed out with respect to Canada West in the 1840s, also allowed the central authority “to form defensible conceptions of ‘what needed to be done’”.⁴⁴ Once the “facts” were made obvious, the government would have its mandate and Howe’s “moral machinery” — his characterization of an ‘educational state’ — could begin its work.⁴⁵ Revelations of the “great destitution of the Eastern Shore”, for example, where at least 2000 children from St. Mary’s to Canso were said to be in “a state of complete ignorance”, were soon used to make the case for introducing a system of education.⁴⁶ Reports of unequal access and of vast numbers of children untouched by schooling in remote rural areas multiplied and left a disturbing picture of rural squalor. Normal-school promoters in the legislature, having little doubt where the problem lay, seized on these reports. The Education Committee in 1846 recommended that two normal seminaries be established in rural districts where they would “be likely to draw to their classes the youths of the country”.⁴⁷

The Reformers’ early attempts to introduce a system of free schools based on compulsory assessment failed, but if Howe’s rhetoric is any indication, the normal-school idea was firmly lodged in the Reformist agenda by the 1840s. His wish to make

40 Annand, ed., *The Speeches and Public Letters of the Hon. Joseph Howe*, vol. I, p. 314.

41 George R. Young, *On Colonial Literature, Science and Education* (Halifax, 1842), pp. 43-5.

42 “First Annual Report of the Central Board of Education”, p. 3.

43 A society in Inverness, Scotland, in the 1820s concerned with the education of the poor wished to ascertain the exact state of each family, in particular its literacy. The results of its “investigation”, recorded in “Moral Statistics”, revealed, among other things, that half of the population in 10 remote counties were unable to read. See “Moral Statistics of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland; compiled from Returns received by the Inverness Society for the Education of the Poor in the Highlands. Inverness, 1826”, *Edinburgh Review* (1827), pp. 114-8.

44 Curtis, *True Government by Choice Men?*, p. 11. See also pp. 124-6 for “social mapping” and p. 36 for “political mapping” in Ireland.

45 Annand, ed., *The Speeches and Public Letters of the Hon. Joseph Howe*, vol. I, p. 316.

46 “Committee of Education Report”, *JHA*, 1843, Appendix 50, p. 182.

47 *JHA*, 1846, Appendix 81, p. 249.

Nova Scotia “a ‘normal school’ for the rest of the colonies” was hyperbole, but it captured the spirit of Reform faith in the state’s potential to transform society. The normal school as a metaphor for the state’s educative powers clearly belonged to the language of reform in these years. John Stuart Mill, for example, characterized free municipal institutions of the kind Lord Durham recommended for Canada “as not only the grand instrument of honest local government, but the great ‘normal school’ to fit the people for representative government”.⁴⁸ The “normal school” symbolized for Mill and conservative reformers like Howe the state’s latent capability to improve the people as citizens and workers. Nova Scotia would be a model, Howe said, “for the rest of the colonies, showing them how representative Institutions may be worked, so as to insure internal tranquillity, and advancement, subordination to the paramount interests and authority of the Empire”.⁴⁹

Lord Durham’s *Report on the Affairs of British North America*, containing more evidence of the dangers of leaving socially and culturally different communities within the same political entity to look after their own education, reached Nova Scotia in 1839. The *Report* held particular relevance for Nova Scotia, where popular pressure was exposing social divisions, making even the language of class a minefield for members of the Legislature.⁵⁰ The report strengthened Howe’s and Young’s conviction in the state’s potential to eradicate unwanted local particularities.⁵¹ “[T]he consequences of unchecked local control” in Lower Canada, Durham asserted, could be avoided through a national system of education that required, among other things, a “certificate of qualification” from a normal school for all teachers. The ministers of religion in each parish or township would still appoint teachers, but only teachers trained in a state normal school. Lord Durham’s *Report* also recommended that children of “antagonist races” be brought together if only for the purposes of play, an educational strategy already familiar to Young. The right education would “soften” and “subdue” rivalries and differences.⁵² The catch was that the education recommended by the Durham *Report* and sought by reformers like Joseph Howe and George Young would also require what Curtis has called in this connection “a radical centralization of political power”.⁵³ On the other hand, it seemed, the failure to create

48 Mill is quoted in Curtis, *True Government by Choice Men?*, p. 26. For the original source, see John Stuart Mill, “Lord Durham’s Return”, *London and Westminster Review*, 62 (December 1828), pp. 447-64.

49 Quoted in Beck, *Joseph Howe, Volume I*, p. 316. For Beck’s characterization of Howe as a “conservative reformer”, see J. Murray Beck, “Joseph Howe”, *DCB, Vol. X* (Toronto, 1972), p. 370.

50 In 1840, for example, members of the House of Assembly amended a motion, which, in its original form, has called for a general system of education “by which the children of the poor shall be placed on equal footing with the children of the rich” to read, simply, “all classes of society”. See *JHA*, 20 March 1840, pp. 807-8.

51 Beck noted in his *Politics of Nova Scotia 1710-1896*, p. 114, that “a single reading made Howe a convert to its [the Durham Report’s] ideas”. William Young, Beck also points out, was another “immediate convert” to Durham’s force of argument. See Beck, “Joseph Howe”, pp. 943-49.

52 Young, *On Colonial Literature, Science and Education*, p. 195. For the report’s text, see “Report of the Commissioner of Inquiry into the State of Education in Lower Canada”, Appendix D, in Charles Lucas, ed., *Lord Durham’s Report on the Affairs of British North America* (New York, 1970), pp. 240-94.

53 Curtis, *True Government by Choice Men?*, pp. 25-6. On this point, Curtis drew from Janet Ajzenstat, *The Political Thought of Lord Durham* (Montreal and Kingston, 1998).

model institutions meant falling behind other countries. Without the means to give every child from Cape North to Cape Sable the rudiments of education Nova Scotia could not compete. Massachusetts had already achieved universal “mental cultivation” through a state system of education.⁵⁴

Convinced of the value of normal schools as early as 1839, Howe, as a member of Halifax’s Royal Acadian School’s committee, petitioned the government to support that school in establishing a normal and model school for the province. The petitioners cited the training received by the school’s headmaster, Hugh Munro, at the Glasgow Normal School and his work in Cape Breton, and expressed “sanguine hopes” that the role of the Acadian School would, with government support, be extended to teacher training:

Any person desirous of learning the system here pursued in order to establish similar schools elsewhere will be entitled to attend constantly the instructions given in the Royal Acadian School free of expense. . . . [B]enefit has already been conferred in the province by Mr. Munro’s labours in this department in the Island of Cape Breton where several teachers have been qualified by him to undertake the conduct of other schools in this system.⁵⁵

Early teacher training at the Amherst Female Seminary also bears special mention. In the seminary’s first year, 1850, “nine ladies qualified for the purpose of becoming teachers”, and six were already teaching in rural districts.⁵⁶ Public grants for this purpose and early legislative approval of female teachers reflected the belief of the first provincial superintendent, William Dawson, that women as teachers brought certain advantages to the classroom.⁵⁷ Support for the Amherst Female Seminary was also indicative of the growing use normal-school promoters made of arguments based on the newly discovered suitability of women, especially for service in the countryside.

The unassimilated state of Aboriginal and African Nova Scotians, whose instruction was also deemed to be in the public interest, further illustrated the limits of voluntary provision of education. A petition from the Micmac Missionary Society requested funds to open a school at Hantsport: the rudiments of education were deemed necessary to elevate the Indians “on the scale of civilization and of fitting them to be useful members of society”.⁵⁸ An 1845 petition asked for money on behalf

54 Annand, ed., *The Speeches and Public Letters of the Hon. Joseph Howe*, vol. I, p. 310.

55 Petition for the Acadian School, 31 January 1845, RG 5, Series P, vol. 74, no. 48, Public Archives of Nova Scotia [PANS] and “Outline of a plan for establishing a Normal training School in connexion with the Royal Acadian School, Halifax”, School Papers, 1849, RG 14 vol. 30, no. 320, PANS. For charity schools, in particular the Royal Acadian School, see Judith Fingard, “Attitudes towards the Education of the Poor in Colonial Halifax”, *Acadiensis*, II, 2 (Spring 1973), pp. 15-42. For the introduction of David Stow’s Glasgow Normal School methods at Boularderie beginning in 1837, see Laurie Stanley, *The Well-Watered Garden: The Presbyterian Church in Cape Breton, 1798-1860* (Sydney, 1983), pp. 109-15.

56 Petition of the Inhabitants of Cumberland County, 1852, RG 5, Series P, vol. 76, PANS. See also the “Petition of Charles E. Ratchford for a grant in aid of a female seminary in Amherst”, *JHA*, 1850, Appendix 51, p. 183.

57 For the legislators’ “ambivalent” approval of women as teachers in this period and for comments on the Amherst Female Seminary, see Guildford, “Separate Spheres”, pp. 52-3.

58 Petition of the President and Committee of the Micmac Missionary Society, 7 February 1855, RG 5, Series P, vol. 76, no. 208, PANS. (*Mi’kmaq* is now the preferred spelling of Micmac.)

of “a coloured population of 164 souls” in Salmon River, Yarmouth County where county commissioners had not made a sufficient grant to support their children.⁵⁹ The Reverend Robert Willis, rector of St. Paul’s Church in Halifax, petitioned on behalf of the “coloured” people of Halifax, pointing out the benefits of a sound moral and religious education. There was “abundant proof that the children of colour are blessed with the capacity to receive instruction if favoured with the means of obtaining it”.⁶⁰

Segregated schools for the education of the Mi’kmaq and African Nova Scotians were one thing, but now the boundaries of “pauper education” were bursting; a solution for “all classes of society” was needed. If the drive for teacher training began in large part with the political problem of social discord, the campaign soon became centred on the pedagogical problem of instructing large groups of children cheaply. A report of the school commissioners for the city of Halifax, among them Alexander Forrester, addressed the cost of popular education in that city and recommended £45 — equivalent to the amount per capita spent on students attending sectarian colleges — be allocated for the tuition of nine apprentice teachers at the Royal Acadian and National schools.⁶¹ They were to be instructed in the Stow system, a version of the widely used monitorial method and the method advocated by Forrester.⁶² As Pavla Miller has pointed out, the same challenge must have confronted “countless reformers and educators faced with increasing numbers of scholars and meagre resources: how to multiply the number of children who could be instructed simultaneously without diluting the effect of the master’s will on individual scholars”.⁶³ Curiously, that solution in Nova Scotia found its justification and a veritable blueprint in a normal-school model originally devised for the “coloured races” of the British Empire.

Why political economy turned to pedagogy has few better explanations than that found in a document sent by the Colonial Secretary, Lord Grey, to Nova Scotia’s Lieutenant Governor, Sir John Harvey, and tabled in the Legislature in March of 1848, three years before the First Normal School Bill. Prepared by Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, secretary of the Committee of Privy Council on Education and founder of Battersea, the first English teacher-training school in 1839, the document set before legislators a definitive statement of normal-school theory and practice; its ten pages of instructions on the social and economic improvement of an entire colony provided a complete and authoritative justification of the state’s role in teacher education. If judged solely by its title, it may seem to have little to do with Nova Scotia: *Brief Practical Suggestions on the mode of organizing and conducting Day-Schools of Industry, Model Farm Schools, and Normal Schools, as part of a System of Education*

59 Petition on behalf of Themselves and other Coloured Inhabitants of Salmon River in the County of Yarmouth, 30 January 1845, RG 5, Series P, vol. 74, no. 47, PANS.

60 Petition of the Reverend Robert Willis, Rector of St. Paul’s, on Behalf of the Coloured People of Halifax, 1845, RG 5, Series P, vol. 74, no. 49, PANS.

61 “Report of the Commissioners of the Schools for the City of Halifax”, Appendix, 1850, RG 14, vol. 30, no. 326, PANS.

62 Among the advantages of the monitorial system was the gallery method that allowed a single teacher and several monitors to instruct a large number of children simultaneously. Schools in Nova Scotia whose primary object was the education of the poor had trained teachers in the monitorial system for at least four decades prior to 1855. See Miller, *Transformations of Patriarchy*, p. 157 for the quick spread of this “new technology of instruction” around the world in the first half of the 19th century.

63 Miller, *Transformations of Patriarchy*, p. 153.

for the Coloured Races of the British Colonies.⁶⁴ Lord Grey nevertheless believed that the document's suggestions were applicable and potentially beneficial to all British Colonies; he hoped that they would be found "susceptible of adoption" in Nova Scotia.⁶⁵

The House of Assembly's Education Committee members, impressed by the renowned author, viewed the document as an additional means of promoting their cause, a provincial system of education:

Although prepared for a population so different and inferior to ours, it is a document highly valuable, because it has been drawn up by Mr. B. Kay Shuttleworth, the secretary of the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council on Education — a gentleman who has reached this high station from his extensive acquaintance with the subject, his wide experience and acknowledged talents. . . . Many of those suggestions are applicable to this Province, and as the School Bill will expire at the end of the next session, and the whole subject of education be then taken up and reviewed, the Committee are of the opinion that it might be useful to have the paper circulated during the ensuing vacation to inform and guide the public mind.⁶⁶

George Young, the chair of the Committee on Education in 1848, drew attention to the document's circulation, and described it as "a valuable set of instructions".⁶⁷ For Kay-Shuttleworth, whose reports on education were familiar to Young as early as 1842, a system of education in which children were properly instructed was "a transforming agency" by which a population could be improved materially and morally. No colonial government could afford to neglect the habits and attitudes of its people. At the heart of Kay-Shuttleworth's social philosophy and pedagogy lay the truth that economic growth and progress did not guarantee the happiness and good behaviour of the poor. The state as educator was still needed to manage emerging social differences and disparities. Kay-Shuttleworth believed in a hierarchically ordered system of education. In his view, accustoming the children of the poor and of the "[coloured] races to habits of self-control and moral discipline" was among the most important objects of an effective system of education.⁶⁸ Appropriate lesson books, Kay-Shuttleworth suggested, should teach, among other things, "the domestic and social duties of the coloured races"; they should also "simply set forth the relation of wages, capital, labour, and the influence of local and general government on personal security, independence and order".⁶⁹

Kay-Shuttleworth then turned from recommended lessons in political economy for pupils to pedagogy and training for schoolmasters. After setting out a detailed course of study with a strong emphasis on agriculture, he reminded his readers of the

64 For the text, see *JHA*, 1848, Appendix 48, pp. 177-88.

65 Lord Grey's letter to Lieutenant-Governor Sir John Harvey, 8 February 1847, is found in the *JHA*, 1848, Appendix 48, p. 177.

66 *JHA*, 1848, Appendix 77.

67 *JHA*, 1848, Appendix 77.

68 Kay-Shuttleworth, "Brief Practical Suggestions . . .", *JHA*, 1840, Appendix 48, p. 178.

69 Kay-Shuttleworth, "Brief Practical Suggestions . . .", *JHA*, 1840, Appendix 48, p. 179.

underlying principle of teacher training: “The principal object to be kept in view throughout the training of the apprentice and candidate teacher is the formation of character”.⁷⁰ Pupil-teachers would come from the community they were expected to serve; they would be selected from “the most proficient and best conducted scholars”. They would be trained in a simple and practical manner, ensuring that they would not acquire pretensions and pedantry that would cut them off from their class origins. Trained in this way, they ought to be “attracted by preference to the education of the labouring poor”.⁷¹ In Kay-Shuttleworth’s ideal normal school little was to be left to the judgement of the trained teacher; prescribed textbooks for every subject and level would even define the limits of knowledge.

Young’s study of teacher training methods, which culminated in his Normal School Bill of 1851, illustrates the especially strong influence of European and North American educationists on Nova Scotia’s normal-school design, if not on its implementation, in 1855.⁷² Young’s visit to Robert Owen’s infant school in New Lanark in 1834, for example, and his correspondence with his friend Dr. Birkbeck, the president of the London Institute, kept him abreast of the latest educational ideas.⁷³ Conversant with the theories of Jean Heinrich Pestalozzi of Switzerland, Stow of Scotland, Wilderspin and Kay-Shuttleworth of England, Horace Mann of Massachusetts (from whom he had obtained education reports on a trip to Boston), Henry Barnard of Connecticut, and Egerton Ryerson of Upper Canada, Young embraced the idea that education was no longer to be regarded as “the mere teaching of letters and words. It [had] a higher aim”. Young knew from David Stow, whose work he quoted extensively, that “habits [were] now instructed and formed”, that the children of the poor from the earliest age could be trained in morality and virtue. The right education in its broadest sense of socialization could make people “more industrious, more cheerful and contented”. Children could be taught civic virtue; they could be “taught to love order” and “to observe cleanliness”.⁷⁴

Young’s belief that only the force of law would make this possible and overcome Nova Scotia’s sectarian divisions found confirmation in the ideas of Thomas Chalmers, the Glasgow Free Church minister and political economist. Chalmers had previously had considerable impact on the thinking of David Stow, from whom

70 Kay-Shuttleworth, “Brief Practical Suggestions . . .”, *JHA*, 1840, Appendix 48, p. 186.

71 Kay-Shuttleworth, “Brief Practical Suggestions . . .”, *JHA*, 1840, Appendix 48.

72 Both George, who had studied at Pictou Academy under Thomas McCulloch, and his brother William, who later served as premier and who appointed Alexander Forrester provincial superintendent of education and Normal School principal, were praised by Forrester for their “early advocacy” of popular education: “No two public men have exerted themselves more strenuously for the establishment of a thorough system of popular education than your deceased brother [George] and yourself [William]”. Letter to William Young, 29 December 1856, School Papers, Superintendent of Education, RG 14, PANS. See also Forrester, *The Teacher’s Text-Book*, p. v and Beck, “William Young”, pp. 955-9. For George Young’s early education at Pictou Academy see Wood, “Pictou Academy: Promoting ‘Schooled Subjectivities’ in 19th-Century Nova Scotia”, pp. 49-50.

73 For Young’s visit to New Lanark in 1834, see his *On Colonial Literature, Science, and Education*, p. 253. George Birkbeck was the founder and president of the London Mechanics’ Institute which provided classes for workingmen. It was renamed Birkbeck College in 1907 in honour of its founder.

74 Young, *On Colonial Literature, Science, and Education*, pp. 247-8.

Forrester had derived his ideas on teacher training.⁷⁵ Chalmers' "territorial method" promised universal coverage, or what he referred to as the "moral superintendence" of groups beyond the reach of either church or state. "If we wait till the taught seek after the teacher, we shall have to wait forever", Chalmers wrote of national churches. The existing system was "tainted throughout with the disease and impotency of voluntarism".⁷⁶ The free action and voluntary contributions of separate Christian denominations had failed to reach the people who most required the new education. An effective system of general Christian education, however, could succeed where "all the hues and varieties of sectarianism" had failed.⁷⁷

Young shared the view that any general system of moral and intellectual education (the "inculcation of industrious arts and habits") required first "the leaven of a legislative system, and the imperative of law". Nova Scotians were not "sufficiently wise and sufficiently willing to support a general system [of education] without legislative coercion and aid".⁷⁸ It was soon clear, however, that Young's political colleagues had little appetite to force on the people anything resembling the system of education advocated by leading educationists on both sides of the North Atlantic.

The Reform ministry under J.B. Uniacke took the first decisive step to create an education system in 1850 when members Joseph Howe and George Young persuaded their friend William Dawson, a Presbyterian whose education had begun at Pictou Academy, to accept the appointment as Nova Scotia's first Superintendent of Education.⁷⁹ Dawson's remarkable achievements as a geologist in the 1840s were the beginning of a brilliant career in science and education. Already known for his collections of fossils, minerals and shells, Dawson was by temperament perfectly suited to make the "facts" known and prepare the people for a system of education. He had recently published what was to become a popular school textbook, *Geography and Natural History of Nova Scotia*, evidence of his profound belief in the power of education to promote "a spirit of inquiry" into the unimproved conditions of the province.⁸⁰ The "wasteful methods of culture" used by the province's farmer, for example, characteristically concerned Dawson, and informed his keen commitment to rural education; the continuation of these old practices would "ultimately impoverish [the farmers] and their successors".⁸¹ Agriculture and education would always be closely linked in Dawson's mind, as his many papers and articles on agriculture

75 See Marjorie Cruickshank, "David Stow, Scottish Pioneer of Teacher Training in Britain", *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 14 (November 1965), p. 206.

76 Thomas Chalmers, *Lectures on the Establishment and Extension of National Churches; delivered in London, from April 25th to May Twelfth, 1838* (Glasgow, 1838), pp. 67-9. For Chalmers' ideas on trained teachers for working-class children, see R.D. Anderson, *Education and Opportunity in Victorian Scotland Schools and Universities* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 12-3.

77 Chalmers, *Lectures on the Establishment and Extension of National Churches*, p. 68.

78 Young, *On Colonial Literature, Science and Education*, pp. 171, 177-8.

79 J.W. Dawson to George R. Young, 3 April 1850, George R. Young Papers, MG 2, vol. 5, letter 324, PANS. See also J.W. Dawson to Joseph Howe, 17 April 1850, Dawson Papers, MG 1, vol. 1469, PANS.

80 Dawson sent copies of his *Handbook* to Young in 1848 to secure the copyright. He wrote that he hoped to introduce it as "a common school book". See J.W. Dawson to George R. Young, 7 February 1848, George R. Young Papers, MG 2 Box 721, Letter 324, PANS.

81 J.W. Dawson, *Contributions toward the Improvement of Agriculture in Nova Scotia; with Practical Hints on the Management and Improvement of Livestock* (Halifax, 1856), p. 9.

lamenting the state of plant and animal husbandry attested. From the beginning he promoted courses in vegetable physiology and agricultural chemistry for teachers and later attempted to attach an experimental farm to the new Normal School.⁸² Dawson's main concern from the beginning was rural education, as much to promote the improved cultivation of the soil as the improved condition of the people. This greater balance between intellectual and moral training, reflected here in his approach to teacher education, distinguished Dawson's vision from the Glasgow model with its heavier emphasis on moral reform advocated by Forrester.

Kay-Shuttleworth's plan to connect "an improved agriculture" and the education of the children of small farmers reinforced what Reformers like Howe and Young and educationists like Dawson and Forrester already knew: the educational challenge lay mainly in rural districts, where the uneven provision of education had left many growing up in "ignorance". Dawson wrote in 1852 that "the want of mental and moral training" had much to do with emigration from the province, where most of the people still lived in the countryside.⁸³ Emigration and the province's slow economic progress relative to New England and the Canadian colonies would continue unless teachers were prepared for rural service. The Education Committee, as previously noted, had recommended that two seminaries be established in rural districts — and not in Halifax — where they were likely to attract young people who, as qualified teachers, would "advance the education of the country". As Dawson stressed in 1852: "[T]he object [was] to train teachers for the country, and the city schools must, for a long time at least, be conducted on methods not strictly applicable to country schools".⁸⁴ Trained teachers were thought to be the most effective means of addressing both agricultural and educational problems.

Dawson's travels to New England and New York State within weeks of his appointment convinced him of the value of normal schools in elevating the character of teachers and schools. He later told audiences all over Nova Scotia that a normal school would introduce "uniform and systematic teaching" and would give teaching "the rank of a profession".⁸⁵ A centralized training system would replace the "arbitrary manner" in which local boards found and licensed teachers. He made this clear in his second *Annual Report* :

Since the efficacy of any system of instruction must depend on the competencies of the teachers employed, means for their training must be provided; and on this account I would strongly insist on the necessity of a provision for the foundation of a Provincial Normal School.⁸⁶

Between 27 June and 5 August 1850, Dawson completed his first "Educational Circuit", comprising visits to 178 schools, 21 public meetings, and 35 evening

82 The lot of land purchased for the site of the Normal School was level with "good soil" making it "well adapted for agricultural purposes". See "Reports for Commissioners for Erecting a Building Designed for a Normal School", *JHA*, 1854-5, Appendix 69, p. 251.

83 "Report of the Schools of Nova Scotia, for the Year 1851 by the Superintendent of Education", p. 8.

84 "Report on the Schools of Nova Scotia for the Year 1852", *JHA*, 1853, Appendix 10, p. 16.

85 *Journal of Education for Nova Scotia* (1 August, 1851), 1, 1, pp. 1-2 and the "Report on the Schools of Nova Scotia, for the Year 1852", *JHA*, 1853, Appendix 10, pp. 9, 16.

86 "Report on the Schools of Nova Scotia for the Year of 1851 by the Superintendent of Education", p. 9.

lectures. His purpose was to create a climate of opinion in favour of a general system of education supported by direct taxation with benefits for “all the young people in our province”. In promising improved opportunities for all youth and a “constant supply” of competent teachers, Dawson referred to “approved methods” but revealed little of the character of the new pedagogy. At each stop he asked citizens to pass a resolution in support of establishing a normal school “for the purpose of giving uniformity to our provincial system of education”. A standardized form, addressed “To the Honourable Members of the Legislative Council of the Province of Nova Scotia”, was supplied by Dawson, with each district urged to petition the provincial government for three things: 1. A provincial normal school 2. County assessment for the support of schools 3. Annual inspection of each school.⁸⁷

The challenge of stirring the public mind on the subject of education made Dawson act, in his own words, more as “an educational missionary than in a merely official capacity”. His task was to “prepare the public mind for a new and improved educational system”.⁸⁸ Not for a moment did Dawson the public educator doubt the universal validity of his principles or evince anything but certainty that local control of education should give way to the new centralized authority of his office.⁸⁹ That his mission effectively mobilized support is evident in over 100 petitions signed by many hundreds of people and sent to the Legislative Council. A petition from Pictou, using Dawson’s own words, linked a normal institution to “the most approved methods of instruction”.⁹⁰ His statistical work also pushed education into the public consciousness and garnered political support. A report of the Halifax School Commissioners in support of normal-school training noted that the statistics collected by Dawson afforded “abundant proof of existing defects” [in the provision of schooling].⁹¹ The “need” for teacher training was now demonstrable, made so by his statistical evidence; his work was making the need for training “obvious” and “essential”. As Dawson’s friend George Young had pointed out ten years earlier, the real need in public education was not simply “to meet the demand [for it] — but to create the demand itself”.⁹² This Dawson had done.

Dawson’s visits to New England’s normal schools revealed other advantages, notably the potential of young women to serve as rural teachers. The West Newton Normal, the oldest in Massachusetts, was intended “exclusively for the training of female teachers”, and its pupils were primarily daughters of farmers, mechanics and

87 For the standardized form, see Petitions 1853, RG 5, Series P, vol. 76, PANS. For Dawson’s career, see Rankine Dawson, ed., *Fifty Years of Work in Canada, Scientific and Educational* (London and Edinburgh, 1901) and Susan Sheets-Pyenson, *John William Dawson, Faith, Hope, and Science* (Montreal and Kingston, 1996).

88 “Report of the Superintendent for 1851”, p. 27. For Dawson’s work as superintendent, see John P. Vaillancourt, “John William Dawson: Educational Missionary in Nova Scotia 1850-1853”, M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1972). For Dawson’s own view, see *Fifty Years of Work in Canada*, pp. 68-88.

89 Compare Prentice, “The Public Instructor”, in McDonald and Chaiton, eds., *Egerton Ryerson and His Times*, pp. 132-3. Prentice notes that “moral fervour” was typical of the first generation of schoolmen.

90 Petition from the Inhabitants of the County of Pictou, 1852, RG 5, Series P, vol. 76, o. 40, PANS.

91 Commissioners of Schools, City of Halifax, 18 February 1853, RG 5, Series 5, vol. 76, no. 72, PANS.

92 Young, *On Colonial Literature, Science, and Education*, p. 178.

merchants.⁹³ Dawson's scribbled notes from this visit summarized the advantages of training these young women: "Female teachers their employment in the U. States, advantages cheapness, tendency to marry, good complement of girls get married — no loss".⁹⁴ They would teach for only a few years but the benefits of their training were permanent: "They marry . . . furnishing a race of wives and mothers possessing a superior education" and schools were at least supplied with "a succession of young and able teachers".⁹⁵ Dawson's discussions with Henry Barnard in Connecticut confirmed his view that "female teachers had no trouble managing schools". Moreover, the establishment of a normal school would make teaching "more fully accessible to the young women of Nova Scotia".⁹⁶ Their availability and affordability, as well as their presumably high moral standing, made them attractive to reformers and school trustees alike, overcoming traditional biases against women as teachers. This was the rationale behind a process that was beginning to turn young unmarried country girls and women into Prentice's "servants of the state", valued for their low cost and their moral example in the classroom.⁹⁷

Dawson was also favourably impressed by the rural setting of the Bridgewater Normal in Massachusetts and saw it as a good model for Nova Scotia. While he was doubtlessly more influenced by a rural location's potential in providing an education in agriculture, others, heeding Stow's warning of "the demoralizing influences of large towns and rural villages",⁹⁸ saw moral benefits in tucking Nova Scotia's school away somewhere in the countryside, safely removing students from the temptations of the city. As the superintendent's report for 1854 noted, Truro was not only cheaper than Halifax and therefore within the means of the students, it was also a location more conducive to "the fostering of habits so desirable in a teacher of youth". Not all supporters of a normal school endorsed rustication. Hugh Munro, whose background as an educator has already been noted, predicted an "entire failure" if placed in Truro, pointing to the broader educational benefits of the urban locations chosen in England, Scotland and Canada West. "The difference in the price of board would be more than compensated for", Munro argued, "by the advantages young men would have attending other institutions in the city".⁹⁹ The decision to build in Truro, a location distant from the province's liberal arts colleges, in the end only confirmed the

93 "Preliminary Report of the Superintendent of Education, 2 November 1850", pp. 12-4.

94 John William Dawson, "Educational notes gathered while on a tour in New England, 1850". Unpublished papers, McGill University Archives.

95 "Preliminary Report of the Superintendent of Education", *JHA*, 1851, Appendix 53, p. 14.

96 "Preliminary Report of the Superintendent of Education", *JHA*, 1851, Appendix 53, p. 211. Dawson's correspondence with Henry Barnard illustrates further the importance of the international normal-school movement to the Nova Scotia undertaking. Barnard praised the first issue of Dawson's *Journal of Education*, calling it "a most important agency in your pioneer movement". Barnard also agreed to send documents to Dawson which would furnish him with "facts and arguments" in aid of efforts in Nova Scotia. Barnard also provided Dawson with plans for schoolhouses and furniture. See Henry Barnard to Dawson, 9 August 1851, School Papers, 1853, RG 14, vol. 811, no. 16, PANS.

97 See Prentice, "From Household to School House", pp. 25-48.

98 Stow, *The Training System, Moral Training School, and Normal Seminary*, p. iii.

99 See the *Novascotian* (Halifax), 27 March 1854, p. 6. The House Speaker William Young, soon to succeed J.B. Uniacke as government leader, favoured Truro because of the cheaper board and lodging.

suspicions of those who criticized the institution's narrow training focus and its apparent Presbyterian bias.¹⁰⁰

On 10 March 1851, Dawson addressed the House Education Committee, telling them that a normal school should be "the head and centre of education in the province". He also suggested that merging the office of superintendent with that of principal of the new normal school would be "at once economical and efficient".¹⁰¹ Two weeks later, "a spirited debate" on the founding of a normal school ended in failure, and delayed the eventual opening for four years.¹⁰² The Normal School Bill had been "vigorously defended" by George Young, its sponsor, and 15 other members, while 21 opposed. The *Novascotian* reported that the main cause of opposition was the expense — and the necessity of introducing the principle of compulsory assessment.¹⁰³ Dawson's effort to make the normal school's design "suitable for a small and poor province" had not been enough.¹⁰⁴

The "humiliating" defeat of the Normal School Bill angered Superintendent Dawson, for his recommendations for inspection, assessment and a training school were, in his words, "neither utopian or premature". He resigned in frustration in 1852, his native province still, in his view, stuck in its past: "Lower ground could not have been taken without imputing to the legislature an unworthy pusillanimity, or to the people they represent a degree of backwardness not found in other colonies".¹⁰⁵ Dawson's reaction is further reason to accept Julian Gwyn's conclusion that, given the province's straitened circumstances, "Nova Scotia's intelligentsia suffered from immoderate hopes about the colony's prospects".¹⁰⁶ Guildford has made the same point, referring to Dawson's "naive optimism about the willingness of Nova Scotians to adopt school reform".¹⁰⁷ She added that the Assembly had done no more than to pay "lip service to the idea of creating a professionally trained teaching staff".¹⁰⁸ Reform politicians, those closer to the fears of their rural constituents, had, from their point of view, proceeded cautiously and had resisted the pressure from Dawson and others to introduce new taxes and centralize educational authority. The limited powers of the 1850 *Act for the Encouragement of Education* under which Dawson worked were only a tentative step towards the system he had in mind.¹⁰⁹

Opposition to normal-school training also came from parents and communities still

100 The five commissioners appointed to select a site for the normal school in "a central and convenient locality" included three Presbyterians from Colchester and Pictou counties: William Dawson, the man more than anyone else responsible for the design of the eventual normal school; Samuel Creelman, the Financial Secretary and member for Truro Township who had introduced the second Normal School Bill in 1854 as a government measure; and Adams G. Archibald, member for Colchester and later Attorney General.

101 *Novascotian*, 10 March 1851, p. 1.

102 *Novascotian*, 31 March 1851.

103 *Novascotian*, 31 March 1851.

104 *Journal of Education for Nova Scotia* (August 1851), 1, 1, p. 1.

105 "Annual Report on the Schools of Nova Scotia for the Year 1852", p. 4.

106 Gwyn, *Excessive Expectations*, p. 9.

107 Guildford, "Public School Reform and the Halifax Middle Class, 1850-1870", p. 108.

108 Guildford, "Public School Reform and the Halifax Middle Class, 1850-1870", pp. 122-3.

109 Guildford writes that the 1850 Act "sidestepped the controversial issues" like local assessment. The Reformers regarded the bill as an interim step. See "Public School Reform and the Halifax Middle Class, 1850-1870", pp. 107-8.

not convinced that good education for their children depended on trained teachers. Their suspicions that Reform politicians were attempting to “wrest from the people the education of their children”, as Howe had earlier described their fears, had not been allayed by Dawson’s efforts.¹¹⁰ Nor had their doubts about the need for training itself disappeared. Their objections provide evidence for a counterfactual consideration. Given the rising demand for education, was there an alternative to the establishment of a provincial normal school? Over 100 petitioners from Hants county thought so in 1853. They objected to being forced by “any compulsory law” to educate their children in a different way. They opposed more than the principle of direct taxation; they also insisted that provision had already been made for the instruction of schoolteachers, claiming that an existing preparation was “fully adequate to the condition and circumstances of the county”.¹¹¹ Their belief was that the government already prepared teachers through its support of grammar schools and academies in each county. Were these schools and academies not supposed to provide schoolmasters? What were the 17 academies for if not to provide teachers? The Hants petitioners assumed that a good general education, without training, was all that was required. The cost of a normal school would require public funds “greatly exceeding the benefits likely to be derived therefrom”. There was no chance, however, as it soon became evident, of a generous legislative provision in support of the establishment of a normal school.

The act establishing a provincial normal school for Nova Scotia finally received royal assent on 31 March 1854.¹¹² The defeat of the 1851 Normal School Bill must have haunted normal-school supporters even in their moment of triumph, however, because history almost repeated itself. In 1851, seven Conservative members of the House of Assembly and four Reform members, all from predominantly Baptist constituencies in the Annapolis Valley, had combined with members from strong Scottish, Irish and Acadian Roman Catholic ridings to effectively kill the Normal School Bill.¹¹³ In 1854, a less cohesive combination of members from Baptist, Catholic and Acadian constituencies failed where they had succeeded in 1851, their motion for deferral on third reading narrowly defeated by 25 normal-school supporters.¹¹⁴ Several members broke party ranks and supported the normal school in 1854, including two from Baptist ridings in Kings and Hants, their switched votes perhaps strategically linked to railway politics, the main business of the day.¹¹⁵ Given the fluidity of party alignment it is difficult to pinpoint the cause for the reversal of

110 Annand, ed., *The Speeches and Public Letters of the Hon. Joseph Howe*, vol. I, p. 380.

111 Petition of Hants County Inhabitants, 1853, RG 5, Series P, vol. 76, no. 78, PANS.

112 “An Act to establish a Normal School”, 1854 Chapter 5, *The Statutes of Nova Scotia 1851-1884*.

113 The following day a motion to rescind was carried in the affirmative only to die on the order books.

114 10 March, *JHA*, 1854, p. 479. For party affiliation, see Shirley B. Elliott, ed., *The Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia 1758-1983* (Province of Nova Scotia, 1984).

115 William Dawson wrote in 1850 to Joseph Howe, the Provincial Secretary, expressing his hope that the Railway Bill would not prevent the government from establishing a training school in the next session. See Letter to Howe, 25 September 1850, Dawson Papers, MG 1, vol. 1469, PANS. At the official opening of the Provincial Normal School, a statement by the Secretary of the Board of Directors appointed to manage the new institution noted that the Assembly, “engrossed with the exciting topics growing out of the railroad legislation had no time for the discussion of subjects like [the normal-school]”. See *Inaugural Services*, p. 5.

the 1851 defeat. Certainly the successful bill was innocent of any measures that would change the way teachers were licensed, making it easier to support for members who wavered. It is worth noting, as well, the razor-thin passage of Howe's railway bills at the same time and also after several years of deadlock.¹¹⁶

Perfectly clear from the 1854 vote, however, was the continuing division along religious lines. The support of three Presbyterian cabinet ministers, when combined with that of the Provincial Secretary, Joseph Howe, who had previously lost the trust of Baptist supporters of Acadia College, only served to deepen the belief among opponents that the normal school was, in fact, a denominational institution.¹¹⁷ The subsequent dual appointment of the Reverend Alexander Forrester as principal and as provincial superintendent of schools by his friend William Young, the new government leader and fellow Presbyterian, raised even more hostility. Suspicions of sectarianism would cling to Forrester and his institution in its early years and would even increase after 1855.¹¹⁸ The normal school would be tangled up for more than a decade in the controversy over the funding of denominational colleges and it would suffer from a widely held perception of its Presbyterian origins and character.¹¹⁹ William Young left no doubt of this when he wrote to his friend William Dawson in 1856: "I am sorry to say that our friend Dr. Forrester's antecedents have roused so strong a feeling against him among the Catholic body as to embarrass every movement in support of the Normal School".¹²⁰

A brief economic up-turn in 1854 is less likely to have been a factor behind the bill's passage as the cost to the provincial treasury and fear of direct taxation were still on the minds of supporters in 1854. A Reform member from Colchester County, G.W. McLelan, said that members should be "quite content with the humble imitation [of a normal school] proposed by the bill". A model closer to the Glasgow seminary, the one advocated by Reform member Hugh Munro, was "too dear for Nova Scotia".¹²¹ The meagre sum of £1000 finally granted for construction reflected the same cautious and even half-hearted support for the new school had struck observers at the time as small, especially when compared to the "magnificent appropriation" of £25,000 for

116 For "the corrosive effect of the railway question on parties", see Beck, *Politics of Nova Scotia, 1710-1896*, pp. 139-40.

117 The ministers were the Attorney General, William Young; the Financial Secretary, Samuel Creelman; and Minister without portfolio, W.A. Henry. On Howe's involvement in the controversy over public support for denominational colleges, see J. Murray Beck, *Joseph Howe: The Briton Becomes a Canadian 1848-1873*, vol. 2 (Montreal & Kingston, 1983), pp. 19-20.

118 Forrester's association with the Presbyterian Church of Halifax where he continued to preach even after his appointment as principal and superintendent made his declared opposition to sectarianism less credible than it might otherwise have been. He was replaced as superintendent in 1864 by his subordinate, the Baptist T.H. Rand.

119 Ten years after the opening of the Provincial Normal College, 35 of 54 students were Presbyterians mainly from Colchester county, inviting denunciations that the institution was a "purely Colchester affair". See "Report of the Superintendent", *JHA, 1861*, Appendix 16, p. 2. Roman Catholics continued to favour denominational training schools even after the Provincial Normal College opened in 1855; no Roman Catholic students attended the Truro institution in its early years. See Terrence Burns, "Public School Education of Catholics in the City of Halifax 1819-1900", M.A. thesis, Saint Mary's University, 1962, p. 32.

120 Letters between J.W. Dawson and William Young, 29 April 1856, MG 100, vol. 133, no. 15J, PANS.

121 *British Colonies* (Halifax) 25 March 1854.

the Toronto normal school.¹²² Adams G. Archibald, one of the commissioners appointed to oversee construction, noted that the sum in Nova Scotia was a reminder for the commissioners to work with a model “better suited” to the province’s circumstances.¹²³ If poor roads and connections imposed limits on the growth of central authority in Canada West prior to 1840, at mid-century Nova Scotia faced even greater problems.¹²⁴ Financial and administrative constraints were real and local politicians continued to be strong voices for their communities. And certainly when the deep sectarian divisions that persisted in the 1850s are added to this, the delayed emergence of an ‘educational state’ was hardly surprising. An effective system of inspection was not established until 1864-65, lagging 15 years behind Canada West.

But this paper has focussed less on the timing and more on the original conception of state-sponsored teacher training as an integral and strategic part of a comprehensive provincial system of education for Nova Scotia. Any assessment of the normal school’s eventual impact must await investigation beyond 1855. However, certain things were clear by the time the Normal School opened its doors to 54 pupils in November 1855. First of all, the successful passage of the 1854 Normal School Bill and the school’s opening did not give the government (and the normal school) any more control over the training and regulation of teachers than it had held prior to 1854. This was obvious to Principal Forrester from the outset. There would be “little use in supporting a normal school at all”, he wrote to the government in the Normal School’s first year, if “something very stringent” was not done about licensing.¹²⁵ Nothing had been done in the 1854 bill and little would be done in the next 75 years. Licensing and admission standards, in contrast to the envied Prussian requirement that all teachers undergo training, continued to be kept low enough to guarantee an adequate supply of teachers for the province’s schools, and low enough to satisfy local school boards worried about costs. The vast majority of women (and men) who became teachers would continue to do so without the promised benefits of training.¹²⁶

Furthermore, the Normal School was intended to be but one part of a centralized system of education within which teachers were regulated in accordance with provincial standards. On its own, and as long as two essential components of a strong provincial system were missing, the school could not work as intended. Legislators had seen to this and had minimized their political risk by steering clear of direct taxation in support of schools and by not providing for a system of annual inspection. In so doing they effectively placed the new normal school in limbo, cut off from the schools and teachers it was meant to change. In his dual role as principal and provincial superintendent, Forrester was similarly disabled. Without greater centralized authority, in particular without the power to adopt the “stringent”

122 *Inaugural Services*, p. 5.

123 *Inaugural Services*, p. 5.

124 Curtis, *True Government by Choice Men?*, p. 21.

125 Forrester to the Attorney General, William Young, 14 January 1856, School Papers, RG 14, PANS.

126 Normal-school training also remained “the exception rather than the rule in Ontario and Quebec” at this time. See Marta Danylewycz and Alison Prentice, “Teachers’ Work: Changing Patterns and Perceptions in the Emerging School Systems of Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth Century Central Canada”, in Alison Prentice and Marjorie Theobald, eds., *Women Who Taught: Perspectives on the History of Women and Teaching* (Toronto, 1991), p. 141.

measures he had sought for licensing and training, the normal school's impact would be slight. Nova Scotia's embryonic 'educational state' was still a feeble regulator of the province's teachers in 1855 despite the opening of the normal school.

The story was different in Canada West where, according to Curtis, a centralized educational bureaucracy was able "to shape and monitor local practice more completely" and to set standards for teacher certification. Curtis concedes that local educational autonomy was not "completely abolished"; but overall "the resources of the central authority in the administration of the education of the public were markedly increased under the school act of 1850".¹²⁷ This was not the case in Nova Scotia in 1855 where geographical, financial and political constraints had seriously handicapped the work of educationists and Reform politicians. The "commercial prosperity" that Susan Houston described as binding Ontario's "rural and urban settlers alike in a commitment to 'improvement'" was not matched in Nova Scotia.¹²⁸ Dawson's angry attack on the colony's relative "backwardness" has the ring of truth if it is taken to mean that the province was poor and that there were not a lot of people who shared his belief in the centralization of educational authority. Howe, Dawson, George and William Young and Alexander Forrester had few powerful allies; they belonged to a small exclusive group of public men who shared an educational vision shaped by familiarity with the urban-industrial society emerging in England, Scotland, Massachusetts and Ontario, places they knew well. Their circle had not become the equivalent of Houston's "community of articulate and self-conscious educational innovators" in Upper Canada but, rather, remained too small to provide "sufficient ground for a consensus" in support of stronger legislation.¹²⁹ Reformers were still accused of political and confessional self-interest, their collaboration even in Halifax "largely limited to the Protestant denominations" according to Guildford.¹³⁰

The Reformers' many opponents, most of whom came from remote rural settlements, did not share the Reform vision of an active interventionist state; they were not ready to relinquish the control sought by educationists and Reform politicians in 1851 and 1854. Nor were they disposed to seek a consensus, having greater reason to fear Presbyterian control of the educational system. However, if the normal-school project was still largely unfulfilled, and if training had yet to be seen as "essential", the school's opening in 1855 cannot be called inconsequential. The founders' achievement, limited as it was, marked teacher training from the beginning in ways that seemed likely to endure. Most significantly, the authority to define what properly constituted 'teacher training' in Nova Scotia now rested with the government's new normal school.

The 1854 legislation was based on William Dawson's original recommendations for teacher training. The course of instruction, the act stated, would be "similar" to that provided in Upper Canada, New York and Massachusetts, the models studied and reported on by Dawson in 1850.¹³¹ These models all emphasized training over

127 Curtis, *True Government by Choice Men?*, pp. 193-4.

128 Houston, "Politics, Schools, and Social Change in Upper Canada", p. 31.

129 Houston, "Politics, Schools, and Social Change in Upper Canada", pp. 29, 31.

130 Guildford, "Public School Reform and the Halifax Middle Class, 1850-1870", p. 104.

131 "An Act to establish a Normal School", 1854, Chapter 5, *The Statutes of Nova Scotia 1851-1884*.

advanced academic preparation for common-school teaching. At the core of the teacher-training idea was the belief that traditional academic knowledge for children mattered less than their socialization, that an intellectual education for working people was less important than their social training. As Forrester told those gathered for the Normal School's inaugural services, "the masses of people . . . must be trained to the observance of social order".¹³² A teacher's training and her eventual work were, in this sense, to be determined and delimited by the class characteristics of her pupils. Young's study of Pestalozzian principles had convinced him that education could be tailored to the social status of the child, which meant for most children that an advanced grammar school education must give way to instruction likely to instil appropriate vocational values.¹³³ As the Provincial Secretary, Lewis Wilkins, noted early in 1855, "The experience of the world showed that intellectual education without moral training was pernicious instead of beneficial".¹³⁴ Discipline and good habits mattered more, and the right pedagogy would ensure the inculcation of the desired social values. Wilkins was merely repeating what the leading educational theorists of the day were saying: better behaviour, not knowledge, would raise the peasantry.¹³⁵

The gendered dimension of teacher training as it was promoted also seemed likely to have major implications for the way the work of a teacher would be regarded in the future. Training theory accepted as natural that men and women should occupy distinct domains when it came to teaching; the feminization of primary education could now find its rationalization in Nova Scotia's newly adopted training model. The stress on moral education made the normal-school promoters more favourably disposed to women as teachers of young children than they might otherwise have been. As Forrester said, there were "situations in educational establishments better adapted to one sex than the other".¹³⁶ These were situations where scholarship was not the main goal, where the right vocational (or professional) preparation was considered adequate for anyone becoming a teacher. In other words, where little in the way of intellectual education was expected, women were less likely to be viewed as handicapped. They were therefore more likely to get trapped in the low-status work that teaching had already become.¹³⁷ Dawson even saw a normal school as a way of keeping young women from emigrating, of keeping them in the countryside; they could then be "honourably engaged in elevating the mental standard of our more backward districts to the level and the energy and intelligence of the population of

132 *Inaugural Services*, p. 6.

133 For Pestalozzi's influence in the 19th century, especially in Prussia which was called by some "one great Pestalozzian school", see J.A. Green, *The Educational Ideas of Pestalozzi* (New York, 1969 [1914]), pp. 166-8.

134 *Parliamentary Debates during the Fourth Session of the Twentieth Parliament of the Province of Nova Scotia 1855*, p. 12.

135 See R.H. Quick, *Essays on Educational Reformers* (London, 1902), p. 296, where Pestalozzi is quoted on the problem of the degraded state of the peasantry: "The thing was not that they should know what they did not know, but that they should behave as they did not behave".

136 Forrester, *The Teacher's Text-Book*, p. 566.

137 This was consistent with Kay-Shuttleworth's training model where elementary teaching for women was regarded as a working-class occupation. Also, see Frances Widdowson, *Going Up into the Next Class: Women and Elementary Teacher Training 1840-1914* (London, 1980), pp. 14-7.

Massachusetts.¹³⁸ Backward districts, it was already evident, were places where men preferred not to teach.

Finally, the decision to locate the normal school in Truro, removed from centres of higher education, can be seen as decisive affirmation of the school's rural and vocational purposes. The choice of country over city, of the "fertile intervale of Truro" over the "granite rocks of the metropolis", as the Provincial Secretary put it in 1855, fulfilled Dawson's desire to promote agricultural education as an integral part of teacher training.¹³⁹ At the school's opening Forrester repeated Dawson's view that vegetable physiology and agricultural chemistry must be taught. "[T]he grand medium of propagation" was, after all, he declared, "by the instructors of our youth in every locality".¹⁴⁰ The commitment to rural teacher education was genuine but would remain unfulfilled in its most practical application as long as funds for an experimental farm and garden were withheld, as they were in the institution's first year.

The new normal school clearly wore the marks of its founders' class-determined and gendered view of Nova Scotia's educational needs. The sanctioning of moral education as the basis of teacher training also pre-empted the possibility of alternative visions for teacher education, by placing, as it did, the state's imprimatur on the founders' vision. This is not meant to suggest, however, that a corresponding shift in the public's view of teacher training soon followed. There still remained the problem of convincing the people that vocational training was a satisfactory substitute for a traditional education. Limited opportunities for grammar school education in many rural areas, and a growing demand for it, would even force the Normal School in its first half century to spend most of its instructional time on the academic work wanted and needed by pupils who saw the Provincial Normal School as a affordable way to pursue their general education. The day of the normal school as "a grand regulator of teachers" was not yet at hand.

138 "Report for the Schools of Nova Scotia for the Year 1850", p. 14.

139 *Inaugural Services*, p. 14.

140 *Inaugural Services*, p. 9.