

**CONTEXTUALIZING CONSOLIDATION:
BRITISH COLUMBIA SCHOOL CONSOLIDATION
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PRINCE GEORGE REGION**

by

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Abstract

Throughout the first half of this century controversy surrounded the division of governance between provincial and local authorities. In a general sense this thesis examines the centralizing forces of equality of opportunity promoted by the provincial government versus the forces of decentralization found in the principle of local autonomy. Specifically this thesis examines the reasons why the school districts in the central interior of British Columbia, around Prince George, were consolidated with little or no opposition in 1946 following the recommendations of the Cameron Report. This thesis is a case study of the region approximately in the center of the province that was to become School District No. 57. A variety of sources were used and include printed and manuscript documents from the Premiers Papers and Department of Education, including extensive use of the school inspectors' reports for schools in the region between 1940 and 1946 found in the British Columbia Archives in Victoria. Local histories and oral interviews of participants of the consolidation process were used to contextualize the consolidation process in the Prince George region.

Chapters I and II discuss the founding of two types of societies in the region and the schools they inaugurated. The urban society of Prince George was founded by land promoters bolstered with the spirit of boosterism that originated on the Canadian Prairies before the turn of the century. Boosters actively promoted the development of the civic infrastructure including schools to reinforce the city's central place to secure future growth. Rural communities, founded to tap the wealth of the forests, were inextricably tied to the economic problems of the sawmills they depended upon. Spatially dispersed by geographic factors and tied to the economic fluctuations of the prairie market, these communities lived on the edge of extinction.

Both the city and rural schools were plagued with the problems of rural education in BC during their early years. Teacher transiency and teachers low on qualifications and experience affected

the quality of education. The founding differences between the two societies were reflected in the inspectoral reports. The inspectors generally praised the Prince George City trustees and their schools. They were dynamic and well-organized with the best educational intentions. The rural schools to the inspectors were "inefficient" exemplified by pupil retardation and the barest of elementary programs in buildings that had in style changed little since British Columbia's first superintendent of Education, John Jessop. The Department of Education personnel began to blame this inefficiency on the local trustees believing that local autonomy had broken down, exemplified by the number of Official Trusteeships in the province. The evidence from the Prince George region suggests some trustees did "give up". Narrow social hierarchies in the rural communities forced many trustees to serve for years. Official Trusteeships were a growing trend through the 1920s and 1930s to raise school efficiency just when school expansion was at its greatest in the central interior.

Chapters III and IV discuss the Cameron Report and its implementation at the regional level. Cameron was concerned with the effects of decentralization on equality of opportunity for students and equality of burden between school districts and the provincial government. His recommendations formed a new relationship between the provincial government and local authorities. The essential local ingredient of educational financing; property taxation, was standardized and partly centralized. Local autonomy was reshaped through consolidation with more powerful school boards to attack local educational problems. Consolidation was successful with little opposition in the Prince George region because of the new trustees. Knowledgeable in the methods of boosterism, innovative and dynamic, they offered material progress to the region immediately. Consolidation also afforded the rural population equality of opportunity through the Prince George high school built as a regional educational centre.

This thesis raises the question of how the educational departments' personnel interpreted the facts they used to consolidate the school districts in 1946. The problems of education in the central

interior were an extension of the economic problems of the region. This thesis contextualizes the urban based recommendations highlighting the role of the local community in extracting those points that were really important to the local people.

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Introduction

In 1946 the British Columbia government consolidated some 650 mostly one-room school districts into seventy-five regional, supposedly economical and geographical homogeneous school districts, when it implemented the Cameron Report. British Columbia's decision to consolidate its school districts was one of many similar efforts at consolidation in Europe and North America during the 1930's and 1940's. The Butler Act of 1944 reduced school districts in England and Wales by almost fifty percent.¹ In the United States, during the 1930's, over 1,000 consolidations yearly resulted in the abandonment of over 5,000 one room schools annually.² In Canada, Alberta consolidated its school districts in 1935. School consolidations also occurred in the Maritime provinces and Ontario; the latter reduced its school districts by forty percent by 1945.³

The dearth of historical research surrounding the consolidation of school, particularly in Canada, is surprising. Research that does exist is written with an urban and administrative bias that emphasizes consolidation was conceived and implemented by central administrations to alleviate the financial woes and pedagogical inefficiencies of the rural districts.⁴ In BC, the lack of historical research on the economic, political and social conditions that prompted the Cameron Report, or the reasons for the governments acceptance of the report is surprising considering it was termed "the most significant event in the history of education in BC".⁵ The Cameron Report itself has never been

¹ F. Henry Johnson, A History of Public Education in British Columbia (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Publications Centre, 1964), 125.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ The existing secondary material has discussed consolidation as an ingredient in the reform and growth of public education during the inter war years. Educational progressives viewed consolidation as part of the solution of the question of equality of educational opportunity created in part by a rapidly rising secondary school enrollment as parents appreciated its economic benefits and the progressive view an educated intelligent citizenry was essential in a democracy: see J. Donald Wilson, Robert Stamp and Louis-Philippe Audet, Canadian Education: A History (Scarborough: Prentice Hall Ltd., 1970), 360-381. For a British Columbia perspective, see F. Henry Johnson's A History of Public Education in British Columbia (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Publications Centre, 1964), 125-132.

⁵ D.J.S. Smith, "What Do You Know About Education Finance?" The BC Teacher (December 1960), 150.

analyzed in its own right, either as a document in historical context or in terms of its implementation at the regional level which is surprising considering the longevity of the report. Almost fifty years since its publication, and despite dramatic technological change, rapid demographic and industrial expansion, and new social goals and priorities, the essential elements of the report remain in place and constitute the backbone of the relationship between local school boards and the municipal and the provincial governments.

Contemporary officials cited the breakdown of local administration of the school districts as the reason for the Cameron Report. The facts they used supported this contention. Of the 650 districts, many of which were one-room school districts, only 437 had school boards. Some 213, over a third, were under the aegis of official trustees, usually the local school inspector.⁶ Educational officials were especially concerned that rural school districts particularly continued to be financially dependent in large measure on the provincial government; yet, they provided the barest of elementary programs without the financial resources necessary to institute junior or senior secondary programs.

Little has been written about the public's perception of the problem. Contemporary officials such as Col. F. T. Fairey, the Deputy Minister of Education, and J. F. K. English, a prominent inspector, when reminiscing or recording their perceptions of the era hardly referred to the public's concern, and then as a secondary issue. English guardedly acknowledged a general undercurrent of public dissatisfaction regarding the size of the districts and funding.⁷ Fairey, in an article for Canadian Education, commented on the public's complaints about education standards and financing, and their insistence something be done.⁸

⁶ F.T. Fairey, "The Implementation of the Cameron Report in British Columbia," Canadian Education (Oct, Nov., Dec. 1946), 83.

⁷ Interview with Dr. J.F.K. English. British Columbia Archives and Records Service, here after referred to as BCARS.

⁸ F. T. Fairey, "The Financing of Education in British Columbia," Canadian Education (April, May, June 1946), 142.

A cursory scan of the publications of many interest groups such as the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, British Columbia Parent-Teachers Association, British Columbia School Trustees Association and the Union of British Columbia Municipalities indicate the complaints were more than an undercurrent, but rather a continuous and increasingly vociferous protest. The membership of these organizations and others were united in the perception that by the mid 1940s the province, due to inadequate provincial government funding, was divided into educational haves and have-nots. Urban districts, the haves, were financially hard pressed to provide a complete educational program, and the rural areas of the province were struggling to provide the barest of elementary programs.

The size of the Cameron Report, a mere ninety-seven pages of text, almost belies its significance. Extremely incisive, the report overwhelms the reader with graphs, charts and statistics. The first three chapters, about a third of the report, concentrated on the objective and measurable features of BC's educational system. In Chapter Four Cameron outlined his philosophy of educational financing. Cameron wrote the report with the philosophy that there should be equality of opportunity in the educational system and local autonomy should be maintained;⁹ his recommendations "slaughtered the sacred cows of municipal fragmentation."¹⁰ Cameron's three key recommendations were: local school boards should be retained, a provincial education program be funded through a grant system requiring standardized and equal tax rates on all property and improvements,¹¹ and school districts be created large enough and powerful enough with financial resources adequate to fulfill their responsibilities.¹²

⁹ D.J.S. Smith, The Story of Education Finance in British Columbia (Vancouver: British Columbia Teachers' Federation 1968), 7.

¹⁰ Ibid., 8.

¹¹ Maxwell Cameron, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Educational Finance (Victoria: King's Printer, 1945), 39.

¹² Ibid., 85.

The issues of consolidation and an equitable system of educational financing to attain equality of opportunity were not new to the scene in BC. Both were an ongoing concern to educators and governments throughout the 1920s and 1930s as they tried to grapple with rural school poverty and the public's dissent regarding unequal burden of support. Previous reports, Putman-Weir, Kidd and King, tried to find solutions, but were stymied by a variety of factors. The Putman-Weir Report concentrated on the subjective features of education in BC and did not fully investigate educational financing and therefore did not offer encompassing, long lasting financial solutions. The Kidd Report and the King Report were tainted by the philosophies of the men that served on them and the economic conditions of the era.¹³ J.R. Kidd, a prominent businessman, concentrated on trimming government expenditures including education, at the beginning of the Depression. Howls of protest resulted in the shelving of his report. H.B. King, a confirmed authoritarian,¹⁴ in his report, tried to exercise efficiency and trim costs through centralization.¹⁵ King's report was shelved because it struck the sensitive issue of centralization versus local autonomy when he advocated abolishing school boards altogether.

Cameron's recommendations on the other hand linked consolidation, educational financing, and local autonomy into a triad. So tight was this relationship that no part of the report could be implemented without the rest. To talk of one aspect of the triad is impossible without discussing the other aspects.

This linkage does not completely explain the apparent wide support the report received from department officials or the public. Some districts remained intact, but most, including all the rural one room school districts across the province disappeared into these consolidated districts. Questions beg to be asked about this apparent anomaly considering the public furor stirred up by King's recommendations. Did the local citizens of the districts that disappeared feel consolidation was a loss

¹³ Jean Barman and Neil Sutherland, "Royal Commission Retrospective," Policy Explorations (Winter 1988), 9.

¹⁴ Alan H. Child, "Herbert H. King: Administrative Idealist," Profiles of Canadian Educators ed. R. S. Patterson and J. W. Chalmers (Toronto: D.C. Heath, 1974), 309.

¹⁵ Barman and Sutherland, "Royal Commission Retrospective," 10.

of local autonomy? Did the educational programs in these schools remain abysmal with little or no opportunity for secondary education into the 1940s? Did these factors drive the one-room school districts towards the acceptance of consolidation? The central question of this thesis is why the Cameron Report, unlike previous reports, was accepted and implemented with seemingly no resistance from local authorities in and around Prince George. This thesis will examine the question as a case study of a region with a regional perspective.

As a case study at the regional level this thesis will concentrate on the consolidated district of Prince George. School District #57 envisioned by Cameron encompassed a huge area of BC from approximately the centre of the province (124° E) to the Alberta border and between 52° and 54° north latitude. The main reason for this choice is that the writer lives in Prince George and knows something of the history of the city. Prince George also fits somewhat into the existing studies. Paul Stortz's thesis "The Rural School Problem in British Columbia" and other works¹⁶ in conjunction with J. Donald Wilson analyzed the contemporary views of provincial educators and teachers and the realities of rural schools and communities to the west of Prince George during the 1920s and 1930s. The research of Stortz and Wilson in tandem with a case study of the Prince George region during the 1940s will enable future researchers to draw patterns from both studies.

To answer this central question from a regional perspective, this thesis must focus on the economic development of the region. The construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway first opened the region to settlement and development in 1914 and fostered two societies within the region, different, but inextricably linked. One was the myriad of small sawmill camps established along the railway line. The rural schools of these sawmill camps and towns were directly affected by those factors that influenced the lumber market. Spatially isolated and tied to fluctuations of the lumber market there was

¹⁶Paul J. Stortz and J. Donald Wilson, "Education in the Frontier: Schools, Teachers and Community Influence," *Historie Sociale-Social History*, Vol. XXVI, no 52 (November 1993), 265-290, and J. Donald Wilson and Paul J. Stortz, "May the Lord Have Mercy on You": The Rural School Problem in British Columbia in the 1920's," *BC Studies*, no. 79 (Autumn 1988), 24-58.

little progress in these schools from their inception until consolidation. The urban schools of Prince George were also affected by the lumber market but with a broader economic base the city schools flourished. The greatest factor affecting schools in Prince George was civic "boosterism".¹⁷ The schools, because they were an integral part of the town's infrastructure, became part of town promotion.

Boosterism appeared on the prairies during the formative years of prairie development before World War I, followed the construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway into the central interior of BC and adapted its vision to pockets of habitation rather than a prairie expanse. Less than an ideology, but more than rhetoric, boosterism was espoused by the town's entrepreneurs. Optimistic, expansionary, and aggressive in the promotion of their town, Prince George's early entrepreneurs realized their personal fortunes depended on the town's future success. This thesis will show the Cameron Report was well received in Prince George because it melded easily with the civic notion of boosterism. The boosters of Prince George responded positively to consolidation outlined by Cameron because an educational centre would further accentuate the city as a commercial and regional centre. The people of the rural school districts of the region were apprehensive regarding consolidation. Consolidation did mean the end of community control. On the other hand consolidation offered the opportunity of local autonomy that many community schools did not have or lost as official trusteeships, the chance for a secondary education for their children, a publicly accepted standard for a good job which their schools could not offer and a dynamic board that offered material progress that many schools had not seen since their inception.

¹⁷ Analyzed first by Alan F. J. Artibise, articles specific to boosterism and urban development in the Canadian Prairies are found in: Alan F.J. Artibise, "In Pursuit of Growth: Municipal Boosterism and Urban Development in the Canadian Prairie West, 1871-1913," in Shaping the Urban Landscape: Aspects of the Canadian City Building Process, eds. G.A. Stelter and Alan Artibise (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1982), 116-147, and Artibise, "Continuity and Change: Elites and Prairie Urban Development, 1914-1950," in The Usable Urban Past, eds. G.A. Stelter and Alan Artibise (Toronto: MacMillan, 1979), 130-154.

Writing a case study from a regional perspective of a rural area poses some difficulty. Much of the information pertinent to the historian was never written down or has been lost or destroyed. The best collection of contemporary material outlining the conditions of schools in the region are the Inspectoral reports. These reports for the years 1942 to 1945 form the backbone of evidence regarding the condition of schools. These reports however do not give the human side; the broad social patterns or the thoughts or actions of the populace. Interviews of those who lived through the era lend a human aspect to the inspector's reports. Harold Moffat, a school trustee in Prince George before consolidation and chairman of the school trustees after consolidation, was able to outline pertinent points never written down and corroborate the inspector's reports. Ray Williston, principal of the Prince George High School in 1946 and later a school inspector and cabinet minister in the Social Credit government of W.A.C. Bennett, was also a valuable source of information regarding the school district's early years of operation.

Chapter I: The Regional Political and Economic Context

The historian Gilbert A. Stelter has noted the challenge to writers of urban history is to search for patterns amongst the unique and peculiar. These patterns should not be discounted by scale, location and ethnic composition for they are common to all cities, and produce the city's unique story. The relevant question when studying these patterns must always take into account the decision-making process: who had the power and on whose behalf was it used.¹

The history of Prince George is an exciting story. In less than a century it has undergone tremendous change from a fur-trading post to a major industrial and transportation hub and educational centre. The most significant event to change the history of the Central Interior was the construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. The railway attracted people of all stripes to tap the natural riches of the region. Their activities spawned really two histories in the region: the urban area of what was to become Prince George and the rural history of small sawmill towns that sprang up at first along the railway to the east of Prince George.

By 1912 rumours of a divisional headquarters at Prince George attracted speculators, entrepreneurs and settlers to seek their fortunes. After the initial prosperity of the railway left in 1914, their future and dreams of fortune were jeopardized. The city's entrepreneurs united under the umbrella of boosterism to continue the promotion of their town and secure their future aspirations. Optimistic and aggressive, the boosters believed their town had to have services and institutions comparable to those of major cities of similar size to reinforce the spirit of progress. The railway also initiated the tapping of the green gold of the forests. Tie-hacking camps and later sawmills sprang up along the right-of-way principally to the east of the city, but to the west as well, to take advantage of the easily

¹ Gilbert A. Stelter, "The City-Building Process in Canada," in Shaping the Urban Landscape: Aspects of the Canadian City-Building Process, eds. Gilbert A. Stelter and Alan F.J. Artibise (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1982), 4.

accessible merchantable timber. Despite early optimism the forest industry remained weak and undercapitalized until the late 1950s as a result of economic and geographic factors. The economic well-being of the individual sawmill towns and the viability of their institutions waxed and waned along with the mills that supported them.

The isolation of the Central Interior of BC was not broken until 1903, when the Grand Trunk Railway signed an agreement with the federal government to build a second transcontinental line. The advent of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway was the natural outcome of a rapid influx of immigrants at the turn of the century and the occupation of the prairies in the western United States.² The GTP Railway was also concerned with the economic squeeze it found itself in as the Canadian Pacific Railway built branch lines on the Canadian prairies to dominate the grain trade.³ Only through the expansion of the Grand Trunk west, settlement of the territory and exploitation of the natural resources of the northern section of the country would the security of the GTP Railway be preserved.

In 1906 the Grand Trunk Pacific Town and Development Company, a subsidiary of the GTP Railway, was chartered to acquire land and lay out townsites as major routing centres. The Company's activities stimulated a rush of speculators along the railway right of way who pre-empted land to promote, subdivide and sell to latecomers. In the period from 1909 to 1913, three separate townsites were established and actively promoted at the confluence of the Fraser and Nechako Rivers. Although they initially competed with each other, their combined efforts in the speculation and promotion of land was the catalyst for the attraction of settlers and business to the region⁴

² J. A. Lower, "The Construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway in British Columbia," in Sa Ts'e: Historical Perspectives on Northern British Columbia, ed. Thomas Thorne (Prince George: College of New Caledonia Press, 1989), 344.

³ Ibid., 345.

⁴ Neil Bradford Holmes, "The Promotion of Early Growth in the Western Canadian City: A Case Study of Prince George, BC, 1909-1915," (BA Honours Essay, University of British Columbia, 1974), VII.

The townsite of South Fort George was founded south of the Hudson Bay Company post on land pre-empted in 1906. The pre-emptors, A. G. Hamilton, Joseph Thapage, Pierre Rois and James Bird, formed the Northern Development Company. In association with N. S. Clarke, they formed the Fort George Lumber and Navigation Company to stimulate investment and development, and transport settlers and supplies.

The second townsite, Central Fort George, had a far more colourful history.⁵ The townsite of some two thousand acres was bought and subdivided into 20,000 lots by an agency representing financial interests in Winnipeg and France. Mr. George J. Hammond promoted the townsite under the name, the Natural Resources Security Company (NRSC). Hammond deceptively portrayed the townsite as an established settlement and business centre. He advertised widely and extravagantly to draw speculative capital, claiming Fort George was the hub of the region like a Chicago or Winnipeg. Hammond also deceptively portrayed the townsite as an established settlement and business centre. The NRSC subsidized and staffed many institutions and built several community buildings to give the impression of a substantial community. The townsite was in fact little more than a clearing in 1909. Of the buildings advertised but not built, the railway station was the most important. Hammond was never able to come to terms with the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, which led to the eventual demise of Hammond and the townsite.⁶

The inability of the GTP Railway and Hammond to reach an agreement led to the formation of the third townsite, Prince George, backed by the railway. The GTP Railway turned to the only land available, Reserve land east of Central Fort George. The land was sold by the Department of

⁵ A thorough history of the promotion of Central Fort George can be found in Anna Bumby's essay, "The Sales Campaign of George J. Hammond and the Natural Resources Security Company," in Local History Seminar College of New Caledonia (Spring 1981).

⁶ All researchers agree the location of the railway station was of paramount importance to the promoters of the individual townsites. Anna Bumby, however, contends the method of promotion of Central Fort George led to the company's demise. Acting only as an agent, forced to advertise extravagantly, Hammond was in no position to bargain with the railway.

Indian Affairs to the GTP Railway in November 1911 for \$125,000, and the construction of a new reserve up the Fraser with the cash received.⁷ Immediately after the sale, the GTP Railway's development wing began to promote the townsite. The GTP townsite had the best chance of becoming the area's business centre with the station on their land. The following spring, settlers moved onto the land and significant building occurred within four months.

The consummation of the contract for the Reserve land meant the beginning of the end for both Central Fort George and South Fort George. The surrounding population of six thousand quickly concentrated around the railway at the expense of Central and South Fort George. F. E. Runnels noted that as early as 1912, the money in Central Fort George sprouted wings and it was not an uncommon site to see entire buildings being skidded to the new townsite of Prince George.⁸

The final blow to Central and South Fort George came with the incorporation of Prince George in 1915. The rapid growth of Prince George forced the other two townsites to accept incorporation for their own self-preservation. A committee representing all three townships was formed to hammer out the details. The railway demanded certain concessions from the committee that had to be accepted before the GTP Railway would guarantee the new city would become the divisional headquarters. The committee was concerned with these demands, but the loss of the divisional headquarters would stagger the city. It was better to accept the inevitable than to lose everything.⁹ The committee quickly reached agreement with the railway and the GTP Railway backed Prince George's

⁷ Little research has been conducted on the land transfer. It is known several people were involved and land was swapped to accommodate the railway's needs. Father Coccola, the local Catholic priest, negotiated and signed the agreement for the local Native people during the winter when the males of the band were away hunting and trapping. Presumably they did not ratify the agreement. The issue has now become part of a Native land claim.

⁸ Frank Edwin Runnels, *A History of Prince George* (Vancouver: Wrigley Printing Co., 1989), 123.

⁹ The influence of railways on the development of western towns in general is a point of historical contention. Artibise contends the local people played a key role in shaping the pattern of development. Frank Leonard in his article, "Grand Trunk Pacific Railway and the Establishment of the City of Prince George", in *BC Studies* Autumn 1984, contends, for Prince George, the railway was a major force dominating the local scene. It was the railway that backed the push for incorporation, set the boundaries for the new town that excluded other promoters. The railway even picked the town's name. While this is true the fact remains the only real issue the townspeople worried about was the divisional headquarters that would protect their investments.

incorporation. There was no protest, no attempt to block the incorporation of Prince George because the citizens of the surrounding communities did not regard Prince George's incorporation as their failure. Those who were able had already made large investments in Prince George.¹⁰

The establishment and incorporation of Prince George forced businessmen from the level of individual entrepreneurship to one of cooperative capitalism to protect their investments which were fairly sizable if their personal accommodation, businesses and the city systems they had established were tallied together.¹¹ Their united efforts, after incorporation occurred, were under what Alan Artibise has described as the umbrella of "boosterism". Boosterism concentrated on the expansion of business, through the development of public works, services and institutions that gave the city the appearance of maturity and prosperity to attract business. Their hopes, beliefs, community spirit, initiative and adaptability influenced the growth, shape and character of their cities through the policies they devised and vigorously applied in response to possibilities and problems that emerged in their communities.¹² Prince George, as with many other western cities, had no chrysalis stage of village or town. Boosters pushed for rapid incorporation because they could then borrow for public works to gain an immediate advantage over competitors, and respect from larger cities.¹³

The business elite became a small cadre of civic leaders that overlapped across civic institutions and acted like an interlocking corporate directorate that melded civic politics and economic development to produce continuity in the decision-making process. No decision was made or public money spent unless it promoted the booster spirit. Boosterism was, as Artibise has so artfully written, "more than hyperbole and mindless rhetoric and something less than ideology".¹⁴ Their financial stake

¹⁰ Holmes, "Promotion of Early Growth," 72.

¹¹ Ibid., 55-56.

¹² Alan F. J. Artibise, "In Pursuit of Growth: Municipal Boosterism and Urban Development, in the Canadian Prairie West 1871-1913," in *The Usable Urban Past*, eds. G.A. Stelter and Alan F J Artibise (Toronto: MacMillan, 1979), 120.

¹³ Ibid., 129-131.

¹⁴ Ibid., 124.

in the community made them intensely optimistic, expansionary and aggressive. The first cooperative efforts of the boosters were organizations like Boards of Trade, Chambers of Commerce and Agricultural and Industrial Associations¹⁵ that advertised and lobbied the federal and provincial governments for services and facilities, not political parties that tended to divide.

Chart A and B outlines the civic leadership of Prince George over a twenty-five year period from 1920 to 1945. The striking feature of civic leadership during these years is the repetition of names as they traversed civic positions whether as mayor, aldermen or school board trustees. All were members of the professional or business elite: lawyers, doctors, stationers, store owners and managers, that linked the direction of Prince George's economic development and its civic political leadership. Over a twenty-five year period only six men served as mayor and eleven individuals filled 112 of 150 positions as aldermen. The longevity in civic politics of some of these people is also surprising; Alex Patterson served as mayor for eighteen years and school trustee for twelve years, Fred Taylor - alderman for 16 years, Joshua Keller - trustee for four years, alderman for 15 years and William Munroe - school trustee for 6 years, alderman for 11 years. This same pattern continued well into the 1970s. Jack Nicholson served as a trustee and alderman and was the mayor from 1945 to 1949. Harold Moffat also was a trustee and alderman and served as mayor from 1970 to 1979. This linkage between civic politics and town development should not be discounted. Consensus and the implementation of policies was rapid as these men moved from church to business and committees through the week.¹⁶

Harold Moffat, a member of the civic boosters, was to play a significant role in the consolidation of the school districts in the region as chairman of the interim board in 1946. Born in 1915 in South Fort George, his father had the family house skidded to a lot in the Prince George townsite just after incorporation, when it became evident Prince George would be the economic hub of

¹⁵ Ibid., 128.

¹⁶ Ibid., 123.

Chart A

MAYORS AND ALDERMEN 1920-1945

| | Mayors 1920-1945 | |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| | <u>Mayor</u> | <u>Alderman</u> |
| Alex M. Patterson | 18 years | 6 years |
| Dr. Roy Alward | 2 years | 1 year |
| Jack H. Johnson | 2 years | -- |
| Fred D. Taylor | 1 year | 16 years |
| Henry Wilson | 1 year | 1 year |
| Harry G. Perry | 1 year | -- |

| | Aldermen 1920-1945 | |
|-------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| | | |
| Fred Taylor | 16 years | 1 year mayor |
| Joshua N. Keller | 15 years | |
| Charles C. Reid | 12 years | |
| William R. Munro | 11 years | |
| Edward Opie | 10 years | |
| T. A. Griffith | 9 years | |
| W. L. Armstrong | 9 years | |
| Dave G. Fraser | 8 years | |
| Alex Moffat | 8 years | |
| Alex M. Patterson | 7 years | 19 years mayor |
| W. H. Crocker | 7 years | |

150 positions - 11 people filled 112 of 150 possible positions

Cited from Zanda Goldbeck, Prince George Mayors and Councils, 1915-1988 College of New Caledonia Library, 1989.

Chart B

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

1920-1945

| | Years as Trustee | Years as Alderman | Years as Mayor |
|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Alex M. Patterson | 12 | 6 | 19 |
| William J. Pitman | 10 | 3 | |
| William R. Munroe | 6 | 11 | |
| Frank Clark | 6 | 3 | |
| Fred C. Saunders | 6 | 1 | |
| Jack G. Quinn | 6 | -- | |
| Catherine Aiken | 5 | -- | |
| Alex Wimbles | 4 | 2 | |
| Jack B. Lambert | 4 | -- | |
| Julia E. F. Abbott | 4 | -- | |
| Dr. H. Jock Hocking | 4 | 3 | |
| Joshua N. Keller | 4 | 15 | |
| William L. Armstrong | 4 | 9 | |
| Jack H. Nicholson | 4 | 2 | 4 |
| Harold Moffat | 3 | 2 | 9 |
| Edward Opie | 3 | 10 | |
| Walter H. Crocker | 2 | 7 | |
| Alex B. Moffat | 2 | 8 | |

Cited from Zanda Goldbeck, Prince George Mayors and Councils, 1915-1988. College of New Caledonia Library, 1989.

the area. Alex Moffat was one of the original town boosters. He owned a hardware store in Prince George and was active in civic politics serving as alderman for eight years and school trustee for two years. Alex instilled in his children civic pride and the booster spirit. He taught his children it was their town and they had to play a part in it. He also insisted Prince George would someday become a second Edmonton because of its natural assets. Harold Moffat's civic pride and booster spirit was recognized when he was asked to run for the school board in 1943 to thwart the plans of the Mayor Alex Patterson to build the barest of high schools to replace the aging, overcrowded Baron Byng.¹⁷

The railway also initiated the development of the real wealth of the Central Interior: the green gold of the forests. The rush to stake timber leases along the Fraser and Skeena watersheds fostered its own period drama filled with speculation and promotion. Tie-hacking camps and then sawmills sprang up along the railway right-of-way to supply the prodigious timber requirements of the GTP Railway, the settlers on the Canadian prairies and the burgeoning cities of eastern Canada.

The region is known to loggers as short log country. The main species, Engelman or White Spruce, averages eighteen to thirty-six inches in diameter with an overall length of eighty to one hundred feet. Spruce in the Central Interior is not evenly dispersed across the landscape, but grows in pockets separated by muskeg and stands of less valuable pine. Ground conditions limited logging to primarily a winter activity; only when the ground was frozen could horses and men negotiate the terrain. An ideal mill site at the turn of the century had three prerequisites: an easily accessible timber supply, a river for storage and transportation and a rail line in close proximity for distribution.¹⁸

Site had a significant effect on spatial distribution of forest exploitation in the region. Logging rarely penetrated more than four miles from the railway or a usable river because of ground

¹⁷ Harold Moffat of Prince George, interviewed by author August 1992, Prince George, BC.

¹⁸ Doreen K. Mullins, "An Analysis of Key Factors Contributing to the Changes in Structure and Location in the Forest Industry of North Central British Columbia," in Sa Ts'e: Historical Perspectives on Northern British Columbia, ed. Thomas Thorner (Prince George: College of New Caledonia Press, 1989), 478.

conditions and difficulties in transportation.¹⁹ The drainage basins of the McGregor, Bowron and Upper Fraser Rivers accounted for 60 percent of the cut in the region until the mid-1930s.²⁰ Prince George had so few stands of merchantable spruce it instead became the service centre for the principal area of exploitation, a stretch of track a hundred miles to the east, called the East Line. Sixteen mills and their communities including the most important, Willow River, Giscome, Sinclair Mills, Hutton, Longworth, Penny and Dome Creek, were the centres of logging and sawmill activity.²¹ Except for Willow River and Giscome, the others were completely dependent upon the railway for transportation and supplies. Hutton was typical of the larger mill towns. A sizable mill supported a population of four hundred in 1919. The town was composed of a number of homes, a school, store and infirmary. Smaller communities usually had a school and perhaps a billiard parlour or small hotel.

The other major factor to influence the exploitation of the forests was the developing market on the Canadian prairies. The price of wheat and the rise and fall of wheat exports were reflected in the purchasing power of the prairie farmer and directly affected all aspects of the Central Interior's forest industry including price, level of production, size of development, technological level and areas exploited.²² The mills were also disadvantaged by their own inability to control prices.²³ Site restrictions forced them to log in the winter and saw in spring and summer. The sudden glut of lumber on the market and competition between mills to sell more for less drove prices down.

Throughout the 1920s and especially during the Depression, this pattern remained constant. Spatially isolated, unable to control prices, and serving a limited market, the forest industry in the

¹⁹ Gordon Hak, "On The Fringes: Capital Labour and Class Formation in the Forest Economy of Port Alberni and Prince George District, 1910-1939, Ph.D. diss, Simon Fraser University, 1986, 14.

²⁰ Mullins, "Key Factors," 478.

²¹ Hak, "On The Fringes," 14.

²² Mullins, "Key Factors," 474.

²³ Hak, "On The Fringes," 34.

Central Interior exhibited all the characteristics of an undercapitalized, marginal, frontier industry.²⁴ The high prices of the early 1920s declined to their lowest point in 1924, remained depressed during the 1930s and did not rise significantly until 1942. The mills and their towns suffered through years of periodic extended shutdowns and bankruptcies and had a considerable influence on the sort of school facilities each community could provide its inhabitants.

The histories of the Hutton, Giscome and Sinclair mills that dominated the region between 1915 and 1930 exemplify the ills of the forest industry and the tactics of survival the mills used that sometimes proved successful. The Hutton mill, built by the United Grain Growers in 1917, was placed in a region of poor timber by inexperienced management. In 1925 the mill burnt down and was not replaced. The largest, the Giscome Mill, was financed by Chicago investors. Originally built at Willow River the mill was moved to more productive stands of timber in 1917. Poor construction and under capitalization aggravated the mill's financial ills and forced its sale to the Winton Family of Minneapolis in the 1920's. The Giscome mill's longevity was undoubtedly due to American investment and the fact 50 percent of the mill's production was shipped to the United States. Nevertheless the mill was closed through most of the depression because of the combined effects of high freight rates, high American tariffs and low lumber prices. Sinclair Mills, financed originally by New York interests, had a similarly shaky history. Its strategy for survival was somewhat different. Rather than rely on its own logging operations it bought rough cut lumber from up and down the East Line. During the depression Sinclair Mills purchased many of these smaller mills and their timber leases.

In spite of the size of these mills, the backbone of the industry along the East Line was the other fourteen or so small operations that produced as much as 58 percent of the region's total production during the 1920s and 1930s.²⁵ The collapse of the prairie economy, the imposition of

²⁴Ibid., 30.

²⁵Ibid., 82.

American tariffs on Canadian lumber during the Depression, inexperienced management, poorly constructed mills and the inability to control prices created a circle of misery for all the mills and their communities in this time period.

The advent of World War II had dramatic effects on the Central Interior, and laid the foundations for future social and economic growth and rekindled the booster spirit.²⁶ The turning point for the city came with the Japanese invasion of the Aleutian Islands. Suddenly Prince George, a town of 2,800 residents, became the heart of Canadian Army's Pacific Northwest Defense Command as Canada and United States built a defensive network along the Northwest coast. Fourteen thousand troops of the Canadian Sixth Division plus the wives and children of soldiers and construction workers descended on the region. Rumours also abounded of a second boom as plans were initiated to set aside three hundred and twenty thousand acres, in a broad arc north of Prince George from Reid Lake in the west to Salmon Valley to the north, for the settlement of servicemen and immigrants after the war.

The economic effects of the war on the region were varied. The increased demand for the region's lumber was offset by wartime shortages of labour, capital and equipment. Rising prices and wage restrictions created a labour shortage as the workers in the mills enlisted or moved to higher paying employment.²⁷ Local businesses were unable to capitalize on increased demand as wartime restrictions made merchandise and equipment difficult to obtain, rationing of many products controlled market forces and business profits were restricted to five thousand dollars per year.²⁸

Throughout the period under study, the railway was the greatest single influence to the Central Interior. It broke the isolation of the region, brought settlement and economic development. As a divisional headquarters on the railway, Prince George developed an urban history that began with the

²⁶ Tom Makowsky, "Prince George at War" in Sa Ts'e: Historical Perspectives on Northern British Columbia, ed. Tom Thorner (Prince George: College of New Caledonia Press, 1989), 449.

²⁷ Mullins, "Key Factors," 480.

²⁸ Makowsky, "Prince George at War," 449.

corporate promotion of the townsites, but quickly evolved into civic boosterism when the town's entrepreneurs recognized public wealth and private fortunes were in dire need of protection after the initial construction boom disappeared. Acting as a corporate directorship the aspirations, initiative and booster spirit of the city's entrepreneurs were directed toward developing those elements of the community's infrastructure that would bring respectability and promote further growth.

The history of the rural communities of the region was quite different. Initial optimism waned as the realities of forest exploitation in the region emerged. Spatially isolated and tied to limited markets the sawmills and their communities were weak and on the verge of extinction.

World War II brought little relief to the problems of the region. The booster spirit was revived, the lumber market rebounded, but neither urban nor rural areas were able to capitalize on the increased demands the war had brought for the region's resources. Here lay the essential ingredients for regional consolidation. One group promoted the expansion of infrastructure whether administrative or institutional for continued growth; the other was looking for solutions to chronic economic and social weaknesses.

Chapter II: The Regional Educational Context

The history of schools in the region that was to become School District #57 is also two histories: the urban schools of Prince George and the rural schools of the region. Their separate histories are linked to the factors that initiated and influenced the surrounding communities. The rural schools, usually established near the local sawmill, were directly affected by all those factors that influenced the lumber market. Spatially isolated and tied to fluctuations of the lumber markets, school enrolment, conditions, administration, and student progress were directly affected.

As a service centre for the Central Interior, the urban schools of Prince George were also affected by fluctuations in lumber prices, but with a broader economic base as a railway divisional headquarters the city schools were able to withstand significant downturns in the economy. Boosterism instead had a greater impact on schools in Prince George. As with other small towns across the Canadian west, schools were visible indicators of the city's prosperity and devotion to growth and commerce. The struggle between prairie cities to secure, for instance, either the provincial capital or university, was one and the same to the boosters.¹ Each institution demonstrated maturity, gained respect from eastern cities, and gave an advantage over competing communities.² On a diminished scale Prince George establishing a city high school, in a region of one-room schools, represented the economic, political and social aspirations of the booster spirit.

The first schools in the Prince George area, like other institutions, were originally organized and sponsored by the land promoters and their companies. They realized that schools enhanced their prospects of attracting settlers to their townsites.³ A.G. Hamilton and the Fort George

¹ Artibise, "In Pursuit of Growth," 143-144.

² Ibid., 122-135.

³ Bev Christensen, Prince George: Rivers, Railways and Timber (Burlington: Windsor Publications, 1989), 47.

Land Development Company of South Fort George organized the first school in the region. The school, later designated rural assisted, was opened in September 1910 in a rented building with sixteen pupils. Mr. Cosgrove, a graduate of Princeton University, taught until the certified teacher arrived. The importance of the school to the community did not go unnoticed. The Fort George Herald, the voice of South Fort George, noted:

The advent of this school provides one more of the principal necessities of a young city. Without educational advantages for children surely no town can be considered worthy of its name and the fact that South Fort George now boasts of a school which is well-attended . . . gives this place a vastly added importance in the distinction of those families who are settling here.⁴

By 1912 a permanent building had been constructed, the student population had risen to twenty-four and the newly arrived teacher had qualified for a first-class certificate and moved to Central Fort George; an omen of the future.

Not to be outdone, George J. Hammond, the flamboyant spokesman of the Natural Resources Security Company, organized a school for Central Fort George. In 1910 a school was opened in a log building for five students and taught by the Methodist minister, the Reverend Bell, and his wife. Designated rural-assisted in 1911 after the first school board was elected, the school was moved to the town hall, but Reverend and Mrs. Bell remained the teachers until 1913, probably because no certified teacher would take or could be found for the position. It was not until 1913 that a separate school was built, and only after Charles Moore, acting chairman of the school board, wrote the Department of Education and complained that the seventy-five students of Central Fort George were forced to use a twenty-three by twenty-two foot building equipped with eight desks and a few maps while the students of South Fort George enjoyed a provincially-built school only half-occupied.⁵

⁴Robert G. Dennison, "The Role of Education in Prince George, 1910-1960," M.Ed. major paper, University of British Columbia 1983, 6, cited from Fort George Herald, 10 September 1910, 1.

⁵Christensen, Prince George, 49.

The schools of Prince George followed a somewhat different pattern of development. The first school before incorporation is remembered as an "old red, tin school" partitioned into two rooms. This structure was replaced by the first government-assisted school consisting of three adjoining cottages in the fall of 1914. As early as 1915, before incorporation, the voice of the boosters, the Prince George Citizen, editorialized "the educational facilities of this city should be second to none in the province."⁶ The financial resources that incorporation provided allowed the city fathers to take a far more dynamic approach to community facilities, including schools.⁷ Significantly, the first act of city council in 1915 was to prepare four money by-laws to provide for schools, a city hall, water, and electrical services for the community.

After incorporation the district was raised from rural assisted to municipal district. In 1915, two schools were built to accommodate 180 students:⁸ Baron Byng, a four-room elementary school, and a secondary school. By 1916 the elementary school was again overcrowded. The trustees were forced to rent space until the construction of King George V, an eight-room school that was completed in 1918. Unlike the surrounding communities, the city's schools had no trouble attracting and holding certified teachers given that salaries averaged one hundred dollars per month higher than the provincial average of \$780 per year.⁹ The booster spirit of the trustees to make Prince George a regional educational center with a high school probably prompted Inspector G. H. Gower to acknowledge he thought Prince George was one of the best-organized districts in the interior.¹⁰

Gower's view of Prince George was conditioned by his observations of educational developments in other parts of his Inspectorate. The railway had spawned a myriad of mill towns and

⁶ Dennison, "The Role of Education," 8, cited from The Prince George Post, 9 June 1915, 1.

⁷ Artibise, Pursuit of Growth, 129.

⁸ Christensen, Prince George, 50.

⁹ Ibid., 50.

¹⁰ Dennison, "The Role of Education," 8, cited from The Prince George Post, 5 June 1915, 1.

tie hacking camps. In the region, eventually to become School District No. 57, thirty-eight districts were formed between 1910 and 1945. As Chart C indicates, schools were opened at a continuous and steady rate throughout the decades: nine were created between 1911 and 1920, seventeen between 1921 and 1930 and eleven between 1931 and 1940. Settlements and their schools such as Giscome, Penny, Newlands and Hutton were linked to those factors that affected the forest industry. The initial pride of accomplishment soon turned to despair as the economic realities of the forest industry affected the communities. The frontier conditions of the early schools remained a part of life throughout the inter war years.

The inspectors often laid the blame for the less than satisfactory standard of education, delayed openings and early closures characteristic of Central Interior schools on the teachers. Gower, and later inspectors complained it was difficult to find and retain teachers to fill positions in the rural schools. When none were available unqualified people were temporarily certified to fill teaching positions. Whether temporary or freshly certified the inspectors also complained of the teacher's inability to organize lessons in a multigrade and multicurricular environment and to prepare a balanced timetable.

Teacher preparedness, teacher retention and the use of temporarily certified people continued to be problems throughout the period under study. Inspector H. H. MacKenzie, in 1913, reported inexperienced freshly certified teachers looked upon a rural position as a stepping stone toward an urban position.¹¹ He also complained that one third of the rural teachers were not well-prepared.¹² Inspector G. H. Gower reported in 1920 that shortages of qualified teachers had allowed temporarily certified people into the schools. He noted only 10 percent of the teachers returned after summer

¹¹ Cited from British Columbia, Department of Education, Forty-second Annual Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1912-1913 (Victoria: Kings Printer 1914), A45, 5.

¹² Ibid.

CHART C
SCHOOLS LISTED AS OPEN - 1945

25

| SCHOOL NAME | DATE ESTABLISHED | RURAL OR ASSISTED | OFFICIAL TRUSTEE (OT) OR TRUSTEE (T) |
|---|---------------------|----------------------|---|
| | | | 1943-1946 |
| Aleza Lake | 1921 | Yes | (T) no name given |
| Beaverly | 1919 | Yes | (T) no name given |
| Chief Lake | 1933 | Yes | (OT) Stafford |
| Cranbrook Mills | 1932 | Yes | (OT) Stafford |
| Crescent Lake | 1937 | Yes | (OT) Stafford |
| Ferndale | 1930 | Yes | (OT) Stafford |
| Fort George | 1912 | Yes | (T) Moffat |
| Fort George South | 1911 | Yes | (T) no name given |
| Fraser Flats | 1927 | Yes | (OT) no name given |
| Giscome | 1919 | Yes | (T) no name given |
| Hansard | 1939 | Yes | (T) Hansen |
| Isle Pierre | 1933 | Yes | (OT) no name given |
| Mud River | 1920 | Yes | (OT) Robson Inspectorate |
| Penny | 1920 | Yes | (T) McLeod |
| Reid Lake | 1926 | Yes | (T) Townsend |
| Salmon River | 1924 | Yes | (OT) Stafford |
| Shelley | 1924 | Yes | (T) Mrs. McLean |
| Sinclair Mills | 1927 | Not listed | (OT) Stafford |
| Stone Creek | 1921 | Yes | (T) Richet |
| Strathnaver | 1929 | Yes | (OT) Stafford |
| Tabor Creek | 1925 | Yes | (T) Blackburn |
| Thompson | 1927 | Yes | (T) Blackburn (not same person as above) |
| Willow River | 1915 | Yes | (T) Seely |
| Woodpecker | 1939 | Yes | (T) Thorpe |
| Prince George City (raised to city district 08-03-1915) | 1914 | | (T) no name given |

Cited from Patrick Dunae The School Record: A Guide to Government Archives Relating to Public Education in British Columbia 1852-1946. Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Government Services and BCARS, 1992.

SCHOOLS LISTED AS CLOSED - 1945

| <u>NAME</u> | <u>DATE ESTABLISHED</u> |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Bednesti | 1930 |
| Cale Creek | 1931 |
| Camp Creek | 1931 |
| Canyon Creek | 1922 |
| Fort George Canyon | 1932 |
| Hutton | 1919 |
| Longworth | 1921 |
| Longworth, South | 1927 |
| Longworth United consolidation of Longworth (1921) and Longworth South (1927) | 1939 |
| Ness Lake | 1935 |
| Newlands South | 1923 |
| Newlands North | 1929 |
| Sylvan Glade | 1931 |

break, while a 25 percent turnover took place during the school year¹³. The employment of temporarily certified teachers declined through the 1920s, but South Fort George still averaged 50 percent, Central Fort George 24 percent and Prince George 8 percent.¹⁴ Those people temporarily certified had perhaps some superior or high school education. The Reverend and Mrs. Bell who taught at Central Fort George and Mr. Cosgrove who volunteered his services at South Fort George were such anomalies to the normal frontier situation they were documented by contemporaries.

Prince George's schools did not escape the same problems experienced by the surrounding rural districts. In 1920 the district received an unfavorable report from Inspector Gower. The 1921 school board election centered around the supposed reasons for the unfavorable standing. Mrs. J. A. Abbott, a candidate in the election, blamed the trustees for not meeting regularly, producing unsatisfactory minutes, and undertaking questionable accounting procedures. There was a concerted effort through the rest of the decade to try and improve conditions. Attempts were made by the trustees to attract more qualified teachers, establish libraries, and provide more equipment. In Inspector Gamble's 1928-29 report he indicated a noticeable desire by the teachers to improve school organization and stress fundamentals.¹⁵

Inspector Gower called upon the trustees of the districts to increase salaries and improve teacher accommodation to attract and hold teachers. His solutions, and indeed those of the Department of Education, misinterpreted the problem. The problem invariably was not with the teacher, but the individual community. Stortz's and Wilson's research on the schools in the Skeena and Bulkley Valleys indicates there were many factors that determined teacher retention and the quality of education in rural

¹³ Ibid., 9, cited from British Columbia, Department of Education, Forty-ninth Annual Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1919-1920 (Victoria: Kings Printer, 1920), C37.

¹⁴ Ibid., 8, cited from British Columbia Legislative Assembly, Sessional Papers, 1921 (Victoria: Kings Printer), C22- C72.

¹⁵ Ibid., 11, cited from British Columbia Department of Education, Fifty-ninth Annual Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1928-29 (Victoria: Kings Printer, 1929), R33.

communities. Certainly the grinding poverty of some communities had a major effect on the quality of education.

Another key factor affecting teacher retention was the isolation that affected all aspects of community life. Sub-cultures with weak social hierarchies dominated these communities.¹⁶ The teacher under these circumstances was under constant scrutiny and had to be an effective diplomat to avoid conflict with community factions.¹⁷ Even if she successfully avoided conflict, the teacher might be treated like a second class citizen or community servant under the tyranny of parents and especially trustees who believed they represented the local people and therefore had the right to dictate working conditions.¹⁸ Isolation of the communities could also ferment animosity to the teacher. As an outsider, the teacher was scrutinized closely for morals and conduct that challenged community standards.¹⁹ A teacher's life could be severely limited by any or all of these factors.

Inspector Gower's appeal for higher wages and better accommodations to hold teachers very often fell on deaf ears. In weak social hierarchies where length of residence or personal standing was the road to office, the trustees felt they represented local interests rather than the Department of Education.²⁰ Part of this rhetoric often included the social philosophy of public spending. Spending for services that enhanced the facade of maturity, prosperity and progress was admirable, disbursements from the public purse for school equipment or teachers' salaries did not enhance the facade of maturity or contribute significantly to continued growth, so were kept to a minimum.²¹

¹⁶ Paul J. Stortz and J. Donald Wilson, "Education on the Frontier: Schools, Teachers and Community Influence in North Central British Columbia," *Historie Sociale-Social History* Vol. XXVI, no. 52 (November 1993), 280.

¹⁷ Ibid., 282.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 281.

²¹ Artibise, "Pursuit of Growth," 128.

The Public Schools Act provided a financial base to establish a school and hire a teacher, but the school's well-being was left to the mercy of local constraints.²² The booster method of financing municipal institutions such as schools was the heart of the problem. Early in the century, western Canada in particular adopted a modified version of Henry George's single tax theory.²³ In its purest form a community raised all necessary revenue from land taxes under the premise that the value of land was entirely due to the presence and expenditures of the residents. Boosters preferred this system because they believed it encouraged development since improvements were taxed at a substantially lower rate or not at all.²⁴

The tax policies of the boosters would prove disastrous for schools. The continuous demands of the inspectors for higher wages and more and better equipment could only be fulfilled if growth was continuous in each of the districts. Yet growth was impossible if the spatial area of districts were limited to the distance of children traveling on foot and a tax base that would not consider improvements on land as being more valuable. Also, any economic downturn would inevitably interfere with the number of residents and their total expenditures. It also divided districts politically, pitting the small landholder and ratepayer against the larger land holding rate payer.

The calamity of the Depression ended any progress made to improve educational standards, whether city or rural district, in the Central Interior. The lumber mills, severely under-capitalized and closely tied to national and international markets, could not weather even the smallest downturn in the economy. As the mills closed in the 1930s and people moved elsewhere to find work, the student population declined and the tax base collapsed. Schools in operation in the Fort George Electoral District declined steadily from a high of sixty-one in 1930 to forty-three in 1940.²⁵ Teachers

²² Stortz and Wilson, "Education on the Frontier," 279.

²³ Artibise, "Pursuit of Growth," 137.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 137-138.

²⁵ Dennison, "Role of Education," 11.

employed during the same period dropped from eighty-three to twenty-nine representing a loss of student population from 1,667 to 1,181.²⁶

So drastic was the effect of the Depression on Prince George the expenditure of public funds on boosterism through schools was openly questioned. To trim expenses the board dropped from the register those students that exceeded fourteen years of age, lived outside the city limits, and had not paid tuition fees. The high school had been built, staffed and equipped as a regional educational center; yet the board, early in the Depression, cut the commercial program and attempted to restrict attendance to city residents only, or to enforce a five hundred dollar fee for rural students.²⁷ These tactics were only partially successful. The Department of Education ruled that students boarding within the city were entitled to a free education given that their board was part of the tax base.

The Depression brought to a head the issue of enfranchisement of ratepayers. In 1935 at an open meeting with George Weir, the Minister of Education present, many townspeople complained of the unfairness of the tax system: those with low assessments could pay their bills and vote while those with higher tax bills were excluded if they had not paid. It was a generic complaint across the province during the Depression. The cause of the debate can be attributed to the fears of the middle class that they might lose control of the purse strings to education.²⁸ In the case of Prince George, those in jeopardy of losing the franchise were boosters. Not only could they lose control of the purse strings, but the boosters were also fearful of losing the continuity of decision-making and direction of development.

²⁶ Ibid., cited from British Columbia Department of Education, Sixtieth Annual Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia 1929-1930 (Victoria: King's Printer, 1930), Q119, and Sixty-ninth Annual Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia 1939-1940 (Victoria: King's Printer, 1936), R222.

²⁷ Christensen, Prince George, 51.

²⁸ Dennison, "The Role of Education," 11.

The sudden explosion of development that World War II brought to the Central Interior wiped away any sense of stagnation in Prince George. The construction of the army base, the highway to Prince Rupert, and the airport brought the booster spirit back to life. This optimism was tempered by the resurrection of old issues such as teacher qualifications and retention.

The shortage of qualified teachers reappeared as young men and women entered the armed forces, moved to more lucrative employment opportunities, or accepted higher paying teaching positions in the urban centers.²⁹ The shortage was most acute in the rural schools. The inspectorial reports for 1943 warned the Minister of Education H.G.T. Perry many schools were not scheduled to open because of a teacher shortage. In consultation with H.B. King, Perry suggested the employment of peripatetic teachers servicing three of four communities for children under nine and the subsidization of boarding fees for children over nine where no teachers could be found.³⁰ Classrooms, particularly in Prince George, South Fort George and Central Fort George suffered from severe overcrowding and lack of equipment because of the influx of families of construction workers and army personnel. The 1944 enrolment in the Prince George district was 69 percent higher than 1929.³¹ The stagnation of the 1930s and the dramatic increase in enrolment in the 1940s were reflected in H. B. King's comments after visiting the city in 1944, that Prince George had the poorest or second poorest high school building in the province.³²

The planning and eventual construction of the new high school in 1945, is indicative of the resurgent booster spirit during the war years. Businessmen recognized the necessity and appeal of a new school that would be state-of-the-art for the interior and the centre of community and educational

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Memorandum from H.G.T. Perry to Premier Hart, July 1943, Premiers Papers, BCARS.

³¹ Dennison, "The Role of Education" (in Prince George) 12, cited from British Columbia Department of Education, Seventy-third Annual Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1943-1944 (Victoria: King's Printer, 1944), B23.

³² Tom Makowsky, "Prince George at War," 452, cited from The Prince George Citizen, 3 June 1943, 1.

life. The Mayor Alex Patterson and some of his council did not share the same vision. They instead proposed a school with six rooms and the barest of facilities. Patterson and some of his council were probably shaken by the effects of the Depression. Like other civic politicians, their boosterism was tempered by the need to keep the city financially solvent through the Depression at the expense of expansion. There had been some animosity between city council and the boosters represented by the Junior Chamber of Commerce for some years.³³ To counter Patterson's school plans Dr. Jack Hocking, a former alderman and trustee and member of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, proposed the J.C.'s run a slate of candidates for council and the school board.³⁴ Harold Moffat ran and won on a platform of a better high school than was proposed.

Even after the election, Patterson tried to stonewall any proposal differing from a six-room school. In an attempt to break this deadlock, the school board invited H.B. King, then Chief Inspector of Schools, to Prince George to discuss the design for the proposed school. As Moffat put it, the School Board wined and dined both Patterson and King. During the dinner King and Patterson discovered they were from Bruce County, Ontario. When the conversation then turned to the proposed high school, Patterson suddenly took a subservient role.³⁵ The School Board suggested the inclusion of specific design features, King agreed and Patterson acceded.³⁶

The city boosters also recognized the necessity and appeal of a new high school that would be the centre of community and educational life and state of the art for the interior. Construction began in late 1944 and the new Junior-Senior High School opened on 2 January 1945 at a cost of \$140,000. The floor plan included ten classrooms, a gymnasium, stage and library connected by a

³³ Harold Moffat of Prince George, BC, interview by author 2 July 1994, Prince George.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ A possible explanation for Patterson's sudden change in spirit is that he knew or knew of King's family in Bruce County or, Patterson may just have succumbed to H. B. King's domineering personality as suggested by Alan Child in his essay "H.B. King Administrator Idealist" in Profiles of Canadian Educators.

³⁶ Moffat interview, August 1992.

public address system, the first in the interior. The stage, gymnasium and library were built to accommodate both public and school use.

At the school's official opening the School Board chairman, Harold Moffat, stated the school was the initial unit for a district education plan, but did not explain what plan.³⁷ Later, during the opening ceremonies H.G.T. Perry, the Minister of Education, also suggested that dormitories should be established for out-of-town high school students. Perry, a long-time resident of Prince George and past school board trustee, and S.J. Willis, Superintendent of Education, had visited the city in 1944 and stated that at that time Prince George was the logical center for a Junior College when one was established in the interior.³⁸ Comments such as these from people in authority outlined a wider vision for the new school in the region that could only fuel the fires of boosterism.

Contemporary educators such as G. M. Weir and H. B. King, and educational historians such as F. Henry Johnson, believed reasons for the consolidation of the school districts was the continued lack of educational opportunities for rural students exemplified by the continued existence of the barest of elementary programs with little or no opportunity for a secondary education. Secondly, contemporary educators interpreted the large number of official trusteeships as an indication the old system of administration was breaking down. Some consideration must be given to the conditions of schools in the Prince George region in the period before consolidation in 1946 to determine if these factors were present. One of the few sources that acts as a window into the past are the Inspector's reports of the schools in the region. The inspector was the eyes and ears of the Department of Education. The five-year span of reports from 1942 to 1946 should give an excellent overview of the state of the region's schools. Four of the five years were covered by two inspectors based in Prince George T. F. Robson and H. D. Stafford. Robson inspected the schools west of Prince George, Stafford generally east. In 1946 they were replaced by two new inspectors, F. P. Levirs and L. B.

³⁷ Dennison, "The Role of Education," 13.

Stibbs. The comments of Robson and Stafford lend a sense of continuity for those years, while those of Levirs and Stibbs affirm or refute the observations of Stafford and Robson.

There are some problems in using the reports of the inspectors. One is the bias they might contain. Contemporaries found the inspectors often sympathetic to the problems of rural education; revisionist historians more recently have challenged their interpretations of the reasons for the problems of rural education.³⁹ Another problem is that many of the records for the schools do not exist. The reports that do exist represent 72 percent of all the schools listed as open in 1946 and 40 percent of the schools that were closed, for an overall average of 62 percent. To compare the tremendous amount of information this source contains, the inspectoral reports were summarized to key words or phrases that still contained the essence of the inspector's comments and then entered into a computer database. It was then possible to get a sense of continuity for the same school or draw comparisons across schools.

Within the boundaries of the future School District No. 57, thirty-eight districts had been formed between 1910 and 1945. This included four districts that were eventually united into two before 1940. Any percentages calculated used thirty-six as the base number because the consolidated districts operated as individual districts between 1942 and 1945. One of the united districts, in fact, continued to have its own trustee until 1945. Of the thirty-six districts, twenty-six (72 percent) were open and operating in 1945, and ten (28 percent) were closed.

The region had its own experiments in consolidation. Newlands North and Newlands South were consolidated into Newlands United in June 1928 and Longworth and Longworth North were united to form Longworth United in August 1939. No history exists as to why these districts were united. The schools united were relatively close together and most probably the community disappeared

³⁸ Ibid., 13, cited from the Prince George Citizen 19 October 1944, 10.

³⁹ J. Donald Wilson and Paul J. Stortz, "May the Lord Have Mercy on You": The Rural School Problem in British Columbia in the 1920s," BC Studies, no. 79 (Autumn 1988), 56.

when the local mills closed. The population then followed employment opportunities to nearby Giscome and Hansard. A tabulation of the founding dates of those schools closed in 1945 shows the same pattern. Six have dates between 1931 and 1940, and six during the period 1921 to 1930. Surprisingly those schools established during the 1920s had a failure rate as high as those schools established during the Depression. Except for the Newlands and Longworth schools the others were a considerable distance from the railway and on the fringe of settlement. Wild fluctuations in the lumber market or the demise of accessible merchantable timber meant the end of the sawmill, town and school. This was particularly true for those schools established during the Depression. Driven to the fringe of settlement by hard economic times, during the Depression the people then gravitated back to the major mill sites and into Prince George as employment opportunities improved during the war years.

The issue of administrative breakdown is difficult to determine from the inspectorial reports. Chart C lists the schools open in 1945 and the status of trusteeships for those districts from 1943 to 1946. The pattern in the Prince George region closely follows the provincial pattern. Of the schools open fifteen (60 percent) had their own trustees, and ten (40 percent) had official trusteeships, close to the provincial average of one-third. Those away from the railway generally had a higher incidence of official trusteeships than those along the GTP line. The exceptions are those districts along the rail line that closed due to centralization of the lumber industry like Newlands and Longworth. If, however, the dates when the schools were established and the form of trusteeship is compared a different pattern emerges.

| | | |
|-----------|---|-----------------------|
| 1911-1920 | 0 | Official trusteeships |
| 1921-1930 | 6 | Official trusteeships |
| 1931-1940 | 4 | Official trusteeships |

Ten (56 percent), of the eighteen schools formed between 1921 and 1940, through both good and bad economic conditions, were under an official trustee. To the inspector the situation

would look bleak given that 30 percent of the total number of schools established were closed in 1945 and 40 percent of the schools open were under the care of an official trustee. The evidence from the inspectoral reports tends to suggest that perhaps the inspectors in tandem with local conditions were creating official trusteeships for some very practical reasons, but education department personnel were interpreting these decisions as administrative breakdown. The dramatic rise of official trusteeships after 1921 would suggest that the inspector determined which districts would control their own affairs.⁴⁰

Certainly one of his considerations would be whether the district would last. Inspector Stafford for instance continually noted in his reports for Crescent Lake School, founded in 1937 in an agricultural community north of Prince George, the possibility of closure the following year due to a decline in student population or the inability to find a teacher.

Cranbrook Mills, west of Prince George, is an example of perhaps the inspector's hesitancy to grant community control. Established in 1932, to incorporate a sawmill community beside the railway, it was also the center of a Mennonite community. Stafford's reports continually praised the school, the efforts of the teachers and the quality of the program. His only criticism was that more English skills should be practiced because the students were not native English speakers.⁴¹ Yet for the community's interest in its school, Stafford never mentioned the district should control its own affairs. His comments of September 1941 indicate this attitude. He noted all the children in the school were from "foreign homes" and "every opportunity should be used to encourage an appreciation of and loyalty to our way of living."⁴²

The Thompson School district is another example of how official trusteeships occurred.

⁴⁰ The evidence confirms the contention of J. D. Wilson and Paul Stortz in the article, "May The Have Mercy on You," that official trusteeships became more popular after the Putman-Weir Report in the Department of Education's drive to increase the efficiency of rural schools across the province.

⁴¹ H.D. Stafford, 1944, Inspectors' Reports, BCARS.

⁴² Ibid., 1942.

Formed in 1927, east of Prince George, the trustees had built quite a modern school for the era. The same core of people, including Mr. Blackburn, the school board chairman in 1945, were continuously involved in the district's affairs from its inception. Suddenly in 1945, after years of dedication, Mr. Blackburn sent Stafford a petition signed by the trustees asking that the district be placed under official trusteeship. Although no reason was given in the petition, evidence does exist in another previous letter that the district had been refused permission to extend its boundaries to include development surrounding the new airport.⁴³ The trustees' decision to opt for an official trusteeship is understandable. Some trustees like Blackburn had been in office for years. With no prospect of improvement, a tax system that factionalized the community, school issues that created social acrimony like the firewood contract, boarding the teacher, janitorial and maintenance services, many trustees gave up tired and belittled.⁴⁴

Another reason for official trusteeships was that they made the inspector's role easier. His recommendations had to be carried out, whereas in the districts with school boards his comments might fall on deaf ears. The inspectors used a variety of tactics to obtain changes, improvements or repairs. Praise indicating high community interest and dedication was most common. In 1943 Stafford noted improvements had been made to the appearance of the South Fort George School based upon recommendations from the previous year. He added: "The board is progressive in point of view and most willing to assist in obtaining materials or meeting any reasonable request made by the principal."⁴⁵

To those boards that were not as compliant the inspector reverted to terse comments. The effect of these cannot be underrated. The trustees were the community elite, and any derogatory

⁴³ Letters from H.D. Stafford to Mr. Blackburn, 1944. School District Correspondence, Fraser Fort George Regional Museum Archives.

⁴⁴ Harold Moffat interview August 1992.

⁴⁵ H.D. Stafford, 1943, Inspectors' Reports, BCARS.

comments in his report regarding the trustees or the community had a leveling effect, as for instance Stafford's comments regarding Woodpecker in 1945:

Much remains to be done to convert this school building into an educational centre. There is ample opportunity for the community as a whole to demonstrate its interest in the educational program by improving existing minimum facilities.⁴⁶

The trustees of Giscome must have been somewhat embarrassed in 1945 when Stafford wrote, "It is with regret that I find the tone of the school far from satisfactory . . . I am not impressed by the painting of the school desks in some six colours . . ."⁴⁷ Stafford's most condescending and yet enlightening comments was reserved for Aleza Lake. After noting the impoverishment of the school and its program he wrote:

The school is one of the principal agencies for furthering democratic idealism. It is reasonable to expect that citizens will endeavour to provide the finest possible school building, equipment and supplies. In such an environment the children will appreciate the worth of our way of life and prepare to make our country greater.⁴⁸

The inspector also had the ability to fine a district should his comments not receive action. Critical of Stone Creek School, Stafford recommended certain repairs. Apparently all the recommendations were carried out. Stafford noted in his 1945 report, "Following a fine, the community by means of a dance, raised funds to install a brick chimney."⁴⁹

The condition of school buildings reported by the inspector were the most visible signs to the inspector and the officials in Victoria that change was necessary. Chart D summarizes the schools' state of repair and amenities. Only five rural schools had more than one classroom. Eleven schools in the region were of log construction, located for the most part

⁴⁶ Ibid., 1945.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 1945.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 1943.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 1942.

SCHOOL BUILDING CONDITIONS 1942-1946

| SCHOOL | TYPE | STATE OF REPAIR | WATER | TOILET |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| ALEZA LAKE | NEW SCHOOL, FRAME | GOOD | CREEK WATER | REPAIRS, NEW PITS |
| BEAVERLY | LOG | FAIR | BOTTLED MELTED SNOW | SATISFACTORY |
| CAMP CREEK | LOG | REPAIRS NEEDED | WELL | REPAIRS NEEDED |
| CANYON CREEK | LOG | MAJOR REPAIR NEEDED | CREEK | UNKNOWN |
| CHIEF LAKE | LOG | GOOD | LAKE WATER WELL | GOOD |
| CRANBROOK MILLS | LOG | GOOD/FAIR | WELL | FAIR |
| FERNDAL | FRAME | POOR | WELL | REPAIRS NEEDED |
| FORT GEORGE ELEMENTARY | FRAME | MINOR REPAIRS | WEEKLY SUPPLY IN BASEMENT | GOOD |
| FRASER FLATS | LOG | FAIR | UNKNOWN | GOOD |
| GISCOME | FRAME | POOR | POOR | GOOD |
| ISLE PIERRE | LOG | FAIR | NEIGHBOUR'S WELL | SATISFACTORY |
| LONGWORTH ELEM. | FRAME | NEW BUILDING | CREEK SUPPLY | NEED REPAIRS |
| MUD RIVER | FRAME | FAIR/GOOD | WELL WITH PUMP | SATISFACTORY |
| NEWLANDS | FRAME | GOOD | NEIGHBOUR | UNKNOWN |
| PENNY | FRAME | ADEQUATE | POOR | POOR/ADEQUATE |
| REID LAKE | LOG | EXTENSIVE REPAIRS NEEDED | WELL | POOR |
| SOUTH FORT GEORGE | FRAME | FAIR/GOOD | INADEQUATE | UNKNOWN |
| STONE CREEK | FRAME | GOOD | GOOD | UNKNOWN |
| STRATHNAVER | LOG | POOR | CREEK WATER | ADEQUATE |
| WILLOW RIVER | LOG | POOR | WELL WATER | POOR |
| WOODPECKER | LOG | FAIR | INADEQUATE | CLEAN |
| PRINCE GEORGE DISTRICT | | | | |
| BARON BYNG | SEVERAL BUILDINGS MADE UP SCHOOL | INADEQUATE | POOR | |
| JUNIOR/SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL | FRAME | NEWLY CONSTRUCTED | | |
| KING GEORGE V | FRAME | CONSTANT REPAIRS BEING MADE | CITY WATER | FLUSH TYPE |

SCHOOL BUILDING CONDITIONS (CONT'D)

| SCHOOL | LIGHTING | HEAT | WASHROOM | ESTABLISHED |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| ALEZA LAKE | GOOD | GOOD | GOOD | 1921 |
| BEAVERLY | SATISFACTORY | WOOD HEATER | POOR | 1931 |
| CAMP CREEK | ADEQUATE | STOVE NEEDS REPAIRS | SATISFACTORY | 1933 |
| CANYON CREEK | SUFFICIENT | ADEQUATE | POOR | 1922 |
| CHIEF LAKE | GOOD | ADEQUATE | GOOD | 1933 |
| CRANBROOK MILLS | GOOD | BARREL STOVE - GOOD | FAIR | 1932 |
| FERNDALE | GOOD | SMALL STOVE ADEQUATE | FAIR | 1930 |
| FORT GEORGE ELEMENTARY | POOR | GOOD | FAIR | 1912 |
| FRASER FLATS | GOOD | STOVE | GOOD | 1927 |
| GISCOME | ADEQUATE | CENTRAL HEAT | ADEQUATE | 1919 |
| ISLE PIERRE | SATISFACTORY | WOOD HEATER | SATISFACTORY | 1933 |
| LONGWORTH ELEM. | GOOD | GOOD | GOOD | 1920 |
| MUD RIVER | SATISFACTORY | STOVE | SATISFACTORY | 1920 |
| NEWLANDS (UNITED) | SATISFACTORY | GOOD STOVE | GOOD | 1921 |
| PENNY | GOOD | GOOD STOVE | INADEQUATE | 1920 |
| REID LAKE | GOOD | ADEQUATE | INADEQUATE | 1926 |
| SOUTH FORT GEORGE | GOOD | CENTRAL HEATING /STOVE | ADEQUATE | 1911 |
| STONE CREEK | GOOD | ADEQUATE | SIMPLE | 1921 |
| STRATHNAVER | GOOD | GOOD | GOOD | 1929 |
| WILLOW RIVER | ADEQUATE | ADEQUATE | SATISFACTORY | 1915 |
| WOODPECKER | ADEQUATE | GOOD | SATISFACTORY | 1939 |
| PRINCE GEORGE DISTRICT | | | | |
| BARON BYNG | | | | |
| JUNIOR/SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL | NEWLY CONSTRUCTED, 1945 | | | |
| KING GEORGE V | DOESN'T MEET PROVINCIAL STANDARDS | CENTRAL HEATING | SATISFACTORY | |

Cited from British Columbia, Department of Education, School Inspectors' Reports, 1942-1945, BCARS.

in districts formed later and away from established sawmills. Wood frame construction was common in the older districts, or those near sawmills. The inspectors' reports always commented on the school's state of repair. The log buildings were in the worst state of repair. Difficult to maintain, many were at least twenty years old by 1945 and had begun to deteriorate. Of the reports available only three log buildings existed in 1945 for the schools founded in the decade 1911 to 1920. All but one of these buildings was rated in an adequate state of repair. For those schools founded in the decades 1921 to 1940 a different pattern emerges. A preponderance were of log construction and by 1945 the inspectors' reports indicate many were in a poor state of repair. Economic stability would account for these differences. Those communities founded between 1911 and 1920 had sufficient economic stability to replace or at least maintain their schools to an adequate level. Those communities founded during the 1920s and 1930s were on the fringe of economic development. The state of repairs for the schools built during the 1920s and 1930s also reflects the community's sense of labour as an expensive commodity. Labour was better spent securing a livelihood than in repairing the school.

To a progressive educator, many of these schools were a sorry sight. There were few differences between these buildings and the first schools established during John Jessop's tenure in the 1870s. From the inspectoral reports, water came from a nearby lake or creek or, if conditions were good, a well. Toilets were out back and usually needed repairs or new pits dug. Heating was by wood stove. In the winter months when temperatures could range between -25° to -35°C for weeks, the school room was almost uninhabitable except near the stove. The large windows, necessary for enough light in winter to make schoolwork possible, provided no insulation.

The city schools, although equipped with modern innovations like running water, flush toilets and electricity were in their own way obsolete. Baron Byng built after incorporation of the city was a group of four buildings overcrowded by the rise in student population and in a constant need of repairs. The lighting was reported as below standard, even though Stafford marked the lighting of all the rural schools without electricity as satisfactory or good.

The equipment the inspector found in all the schools was often inadequate. Chart E gives an overview of the inspector's comments regarding equipment from 1942 to 1945. Maps and globes generally received favourable comment mainly because the schools had the five required by the department. What is missing are comments that there were more than the required number. The same point may be applied to equipment of other curricular areas. Thirty-three percent of the rural schools were deficient in science equipment. Fifty-two percent of the schools received negative comments concerning Practical Arts equipment and 86 percent received negative comments concerning Physical Education equipment. There is a similar pattern for the Prince George schools, although the rise in student population was the primary reason for inadequate supplies and equipment.

School libraries were perhaps the greatest disappointment. School libraries had been promoted by Weir and other progressive educators as catalysts for the progressive school and community education. Instead, 44 percent of school libraries were reported to have inadequacies in the total number of books, or subject area or unsuitability.

The teacher was the third and perhaps most important factor in the equation of effective schools that concerned the inspector. The Central Interior districts from their

SCHOOL EQUIPMENT

| SCHOOL | MAPS & GLOBES | DESK | LIBRARY BOOKS |
|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Aleza Lake | stored | sufficient | inadequate |
| Beverly | fair | adequate | more required |
| Camp Creek | satisfactory | repairs needed | suitable |
| Chief Lake | satisfactory | repairs needed | suitable books |
| Cranbrook Mills | good | adequate - need repairs | adequate types |
| Ferndale | good | inadequate | adequate |
| Fort George Elem. | good | adequate - gov't issue | suitable amount |
| Fraser Flats | good | need repairs | excellent |
| Giscome | requisite number - 5 | adequate | good |
| Isle Pierre | fair | poor condition | good amount and kind |
| Longworth | good | good | inadequate |
| Mud River | good | fair condition | good supply |
| Newlands | good | adequate | very good |
| Penny | adequate - 5 | adequate | adequate |
| Reid Lake | excellent | adequate - need repairs | need more |
| South Fort George | good | ample supply | suitable books |
| Stone Creek | adequate | repairs needed | inadequate |
| Strathnaver | satisfactory | poor condition | poor supplies |
| Willow River | need more | fair state of repair | good |
| Woodpecker | good | adequate | need more |
| Prince George District | | | |
| Baron Byng | not enough | poor - need more | poor - good use of books |
| Jr./Sr. High School | good | good | excellent library |
| King George V | requisite amount | shortage | more needed (1942-1945) many suitable books (1945) |

SCHOOL EQUIPMENT (CONT'D)

| SCHOOL | SCIENCE EQUIPMENT | PRACTICAL ARTS | PHYSICAL EDUCATION |
|---------------------------|--|--|---|
| Aleza Lake | minimum required | very adequate | limited |
| Beverly | deficient | limited | fair |
| Camp Creek | additional supplies needed | obtained as required | limited |
| Canyon Creek | only apparatus provided | none | unknown |
| Chief Lake | adequate | more variety needed | inadequate |
| Cranbrook Mills | required materials only | as required | limited |
| Ferndale | adequate | minimum required | limited |
| Fort George Elementary | apparatus provided | various materials | need more |
| Fraser Flats | unknown | unknown | unknown |
| Giscome | as required | good | poor |
| Isle Pierre | adequate | adequate | average |
| Longworth | adequate | no supplies | no supplies |
| Mud River | adequate | adequate | average |
| Newlands | good | unknown | unknown |
| Penny | adequate | poor | adequate |
| Reid Lake | apparatus provided | good supply | limited |
| South Fort George | unknown (1944-1946) | inadequate | limited |
| Stone Creek | none | none | limited |
| Strathcona | need more | varied supplies | limited |
| Willow River | adequate - limited | equipment limited | unknown |
| Woodpecker | minimum requirements | inadequate | limited |
| Prince George District | | | |
| Baron Byng | reasonable supply - changes being made | limited | poor equipment |
| Junior/Senior High School | shortages in 1945 - well supplied 1946 | needed more | good |
| King George V | minimum amount | supplies needed - programme should be extended | limited (1942-43) certain equipment provided 1945 |

Cited from British Columbia, Department of Education, School Inspectors' Reports, 1942-1945, BCARS.

inception had no difficulty attracting teachers short on experience and qualifications. This pattern reappeared during the period under study as teachers entered the armed forces or more lucrative employment opportunities. As Chart F indicates, the teaching experience of rural teachers was significantly lower than the teachers in Prince George. Only in 1946 with demobilization did the teaching experience of rural teachers match the city teachers. The same trend is evident in teacher qualifications, as Chart F indicates. The bottom four categories were all rural teachers while the top two categories were all employed in the city.

Chart G indicates that the rural districts were still a stepping stone for teachers fitting the pattern established by Stortz and Wilson.⁵⁰ Of the records recovered, sixty-eight percent of the teachers taught in a school for one year and left the area. During the period 1942 to 1946, twenty-two teachers taught at the same school for two or more years. Eight teachers stayed more than one year in the region, but at a different school. Of the thirty teachers that remained, twenty-two taught in and around Prince George, and eight taught in rural schools.

There is no evidence to contradict Wilson's and Stortz's assertions that local conditions, community pressure and salaries created the high turnover of teachers in the rural districts. The inspector's reports and letters to the editor of the BC Teacher indicate the conditions that Stortz found in the Bulkley and Nechako Valleys were prevalent in the Prince George region into the 1940s. Stafford reported the teacherage at Ferndale required considerable renovations to make it habitable.⁵¹ The teacher at Willow River, Stafford noted,

⁵⁰ Stortz and Wilson, "Education on the Frontier," 275.

⁵¹ H.D. Stafford, 1942, Inspectors' Reports, BCARS.

CHART F
TEACHER EXPERIENCE (IN YEARS)

| YEAR | RURAL | Prince George |
|------|-------|---------------|
| 1942 | 2.39 | 7.16 |
| 1943 | 4.00 | 7.50 |
| 1944 | 2.75 | 6.90 |
| 1945 | 3.00 | 6.75 |
| 1946 | 8.25 | 8.00 |

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

| | | |
|---------------------|----|---------------------------------------|
| Temporary | 21 | all rural |
| 1st interim | 30 | all rural |
| 2nd interim | 1 | rural |
| 2nd class permanent | 8 | all rural |
| 1st class permanent | 22 | nearly all urban |
| Degree | 14 | urban Baron Byng Jr/Sr High School |
| Unknown | 5 | |

Cited from British Columbia, Department of Education, School Inspectors' Reports, 1942-1945, BCARS.

CHART G
TEACHER MOVEMENT

101 teachers listed on those reports uncovered for years 1942-1946.

| | | |
|---------|----|-----|
| 1 year | 68 | 68% |
| 2 years | 22 | 22% |
| 3 years | 5 | 5% |
| 4 years | 3 | 3% |
| 5 years | 1 | 1% |
| | | 98% |

Cited from British Columbia, Department of Education, School Inspectors' Reports, 1942-1945, BCARS.

boarded three and a half miles from the school.⁵² In a letter to the editor of the BC Teacher, a rural teacher summarized the problem succinctly:

Rural teachers will never have the stigma of inferiority removed [until] the powers take matters out of the hands of those responsible for such appalling conditions, then and only then will you raise the prestige of the teaching profession.⁵³

The general impression retained after studying Stafford's reports is that he went out of his way to give positive comments to teachers hoping they would stay. For example, in March 1942 for Reid Lake school, he wrote in his report that he "was pleased that this teacher had the courage to return a second year to a school which presents sufficient problems to discourage the stoutest in heart."⁵⁴ In September 1942 commenting on the poor performance of the students, he glossed over the essential problem by stating, "Mrs. Sommerville is a capable teacher, who accustomed to procedures in graded schools finds difficulty in adjusting herself to rural work."⁵⁵

In some cases the situation was so deplorable that Stafford had to be blunt to force a resignation or dismissal. In 1942, rather than suggest improvements to Mrs. MacDougal's teaching, he simply recommended she obtain regular teacher training in British Columbia before being placed in charge of another school.⁵⁶ Regarding Mrs. Carlson's teaching at Chief Lake in 1943, Stafford noted she had been absent from the classroom for a number of years so lacked detailed knowledge of the program. He further commented that "In addition to her schoolwork, Mrs. Carlson has to care for a family of three children. It is my opinion that this

⁵² Ibid., 1943.

⁵³ BC Teacher, Vol. XXIV no. 7 (April 1945), 252.

⁵⁴ H.D. Stafford, 1942, Inspectors' Reports, BCARS.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 1943.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1942.

double responsibility has seriously interfered with the normal progress of the pupils."⁵⁷

Even if a teacher received a nod of approval from the inspector, despite lack of experience and qualifications, the working and living conditions drove many to find alternate employment. Chart H gives the average number of students enrolled in the schools during the period under study. What would appear to be sufficiently small classes were in fact a nightmare of preparation for teachers. It would not be uncommon for a school room of fifteen to twenty students to be spread across the complete range of grades from one to eight. In addition, many students were working at below grade level further complicating lesson planning. In a majority of the rural schools Stafford inspected he reported below grade level or "retarded" performance. Throughout his reports he constantly referred to teachers trying to adapt studies to individual needs or asking they do so.

Stafford was also critical of school boards which did not take student abilities and numbers into consideration. At Penny, he chastised the board for the teacher's workload.

Thirty-one pupils constitute a heavy workload. I would recommend . . . only mature capable teachers be appointed to have charge of this school. Adequate salary must be offered to obtain such a teacher.⁵⁸

This situation was not limited to the rural schools either. The families of construction workers and military personnel overwhelmed the classrooms in and around Prince George. In March 1944 Stafford reported to the South Fort George School Board that:

Forty-four pupils constitute a heavy work teaching load, especially when enrolled in four grades . . . It is recommended that the Board of School Trustees make plans to ensure that the present overcrowded conditions will not continue.⁵⁹

Off-hours for teachers often became community-service time as teachers were expected to organize children's clubs, community socials and fund-raising activities for the

⁵⁷ Ibid., 1943.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 1942.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 1944.

CHART H

50

STUDENTS 1942-1946

| SCHOOLS | AVERAGE NUMBER | PROGRESS OF PUPILS |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| Aleza Lake | 20 | retarded |
| Beaverly | 8 | normal |
| Camp Creek | 7 | retarded higher grades |
| Canyon Creek | 12 | normal |
| Chief Lake | 16 | retarded |
| Cranbrook Mills | 17 | normal - slow due to school opening |
| Ferndale | 13 | retarded |
| Fort George Elem. (2 rooms) | 37 | normal |
| Fraser Flats | 15 | normal |
| Giscome (2 rooms) | 52 | poor to normal, depending on year and teacher |
| Isle Pierre | 15 | normal |
| Longworth | 11 | normal |
| Mud River | 11 | fair to retarded - many temporary certificates |
| Newlands | 22 | retarded |
| Penny (2 rooms) | 32 | fair to good |
| Reid Lake | 10 | retarded many areas |
| South Fort George (2 rooms) | 62 | retarded in higher grades |
| Stone Creek | 17 | retarded |
| Strathnaver | 12 | normal |
| Willow River | 16 | retarded to normal |
| Woodpecker | 11 | retarded higher levels |
| Prince George District | | |
| Baron Byng (5 rooms) | high of 197 in 1942 declines to 125 in 1943-1944 | normal |
| King George V | about 350 | normal |
| Jr/Sr High School | about 350 | normal |

Cited from British Columbia, Department of Education, School Inspectors' Reports, 1942-1945, BCARS.

school.⁶⁰ Stafford carefully documented these extra activities such as Guide groups, Red Cross, 4-H Clubs and fund-raising activities, as if they were an integral part of the classroom experience. Teachers who avoided these responsibilities could quickly find themselves unemployed. Mr. Blackburn, Secretary-Treasurer of the Thompson School District, informed Stafford that he was giving notice of termination of employment to a Miss McCallum as of 31 December 1944. He complained of her inefficiency and the lack of progress of the students, but the real reason for her dismissal is evident when he wrote:

Miss McCallum has lived in the city of Prince George most of this term and taken no interest whatever in any social events in this district; while this is not compulsory it is a great help to children in rural communities.⁶¹

The issue that cemented the decision, to stay or go, was often the problem of salaries. Chart I gives a comparison of rural and urban salaries in the Prince George region for the years under investigation. The best category of comparison would be the minimum salaries because, as previously noted, the rural teachers had lower qualifications and less experience than those in the urban school districts. Even in this case the highest percentage difference of 38 percent in 1943 did not make up for the working conditions and communal domination the rural teachers had to face. In spite of the continual pay raises through the five years outlined on the chart, both rural and urban teachers were losing ground. The BCTF reported in December 1944 take home salaries were lower in the 1940s than in the 1930s because any pay increases were eaten up by the rising cost of living and a federal income surtax on unmarrieds earning six hundred dollars or more.⁶²

⁶⁰ Stortz and Wilson, "Education on the Frontier," 282.

⁶¹ Letters from Mr. Blackburn to H.D. Stafford, 1944. School District #57 (Prince George) Archives.

⁶² British Columbia Teacher, XXIV no. 3 (Dec. 1944), 91.

SALARIES

| Year: 1942 | Rural | P.G. |
|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Average | \$ 894.00 | \$1464.00 |
| Mininum | \$ 780.00 | \$1000.00 |
| Maximum | \$1200.00 | \$2100.00 |

| Year: 1943 | Rural | P.G. |
|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Average | \$ 965.00 | \$1352.00 |
| Minimum | \$ 840.00 | \$1020.00 |
| Maximum | \$1200.00 | \$2300.00 |

| Year: 1944 | Rural | P.G. |
|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Average | \$1061.00 | \$1369.00 |
| Minimum | \$ 900.00 | \$1020.00 |
| Maximum | \$1300.00 | \$2360.00 |

| Year: 1945 | Rural | P.G. |
|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Average | \$1196.00 | \$1529.00 |
| Minimum | \$1020.00 | \$1200.00 |
| Maximum | \$1450.00 | \$2640.00 |

| Year: 1946 | Rural | P.G. |
|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Average | \$1286.00 | \$1835.00 |
| Minimum | \$1200.00 | \$1300.00 |
| Maximum | \$1500.00 | \$2850.00 |

Cited from British Columbia, Department of Education, School
Inspectors' Reports, 1942-1945, BCARS.

Stafford's reports continually spoke of the need for higher salaries to hold teachers. Salaries were also a concern of the trustees. In the school district minutes uncovered, the trustees expressed a willingness to pay the salary demands of the teachers. This fact was best expressed by the Chairman of the South Fort George School District in 1944. When a pay raise was requested by the teachers for next year, the chairman's response was to "pay it if they will stay."⁶³

The effect of teacher transiency, low qualifications, and inexperience may explain student attendance and performance. As Chart H indicates, in twelve of the twenty-one rural school districts, Stafford considered student progress to be below grade level. Many students had to help around the farm or the family tie mill, but this does not totally explain the continuous comments made by Stafford about student attendance especially for the rural schools. Stafford's reports are filled with remarks about poor student progress as a result of teacher transiency. In June 1942 he reported the slow progress of the students at Reid Lake was the result of three teacher changes in one year.⁶⁴ One of these was Mrs. Somerville who left Reid Lake in 1942 for a position at South Fort George Elementary in 1943.

For most rural students their education began and ended in the one-room school house. None of the districts, except Prince George, could afford a secondary program. Some students, according to the reports, took their grade eight at the rural school, and then boarded in Prince George to attend secondary school; a significant financial burden to the family and a demeaning experience for the students. City residents often took in rural students for the extra pair of hands as much as the money. Students boarding in town often became servants to the boarding families.⁶⁵ In this respect a

⁶³ Minutes of South Fort George School District, June 1944. School District Correspondence, Fraser Fort George Regional Museum Archives.

⁶⁴ H.D. Stafford, 1942, Inspectors' Reports, BCARS.

⁶⁵ Moffat interview, August 1992.

natural consolidation was taking place, actively supported by Stafford. In May 1945 he noted in his report the seventh and eighth grade students of South Fort George were attending the Prince George high school. He further stated:

I commend the Board of Trustees and the people of the community for making such instruction available.⁶⁶

Again, in 1945 his recommendations for the accommodation of the students of Chief Lake and the future of the rural school district were pointed.

If at all possible, I would recommend that the seventh and eighth grade pupils attend the Prince George Junior-Senior High School. Further amalgamation of the school districts about Prince George city be carefully studied by the board.⁶⁷

The histories of schools in the Central Interior reflected the broader social fabric of the communities that established them. The schools in Prince George, from their inception, were linked to the booster spirit. Their success was important to the booster sense of respectability, promotion of community growth and prosperity. Rural schools, on the other hand, linked to the weaknesses of the forest industry, were plagued through the years with teacher shortages, transiency, low qualifications and experience. Initial community pride that constructed these schools soon turned sour without the financial support to maintain the building, supply the school, or pay the teacher an attractive salary.

The evidence of minimal elementary programs and administrative breakdown that the department used to validate the need for the Cameron Report were evident, but for reasons other than those comprehended by progressive educators. Partly it was the result of the philosophy of the single tax theory that could not adjust to anything but continued growth. Some blame must also be apportioned to the local inspectors for the decline of local administration. The evidence suggests the use of official trusteeships became more popular with inspectors beginning in the 1920s because of their

⁶⁶ H.D. Stafford, 1944, Inspectors' Reports, BCARS.

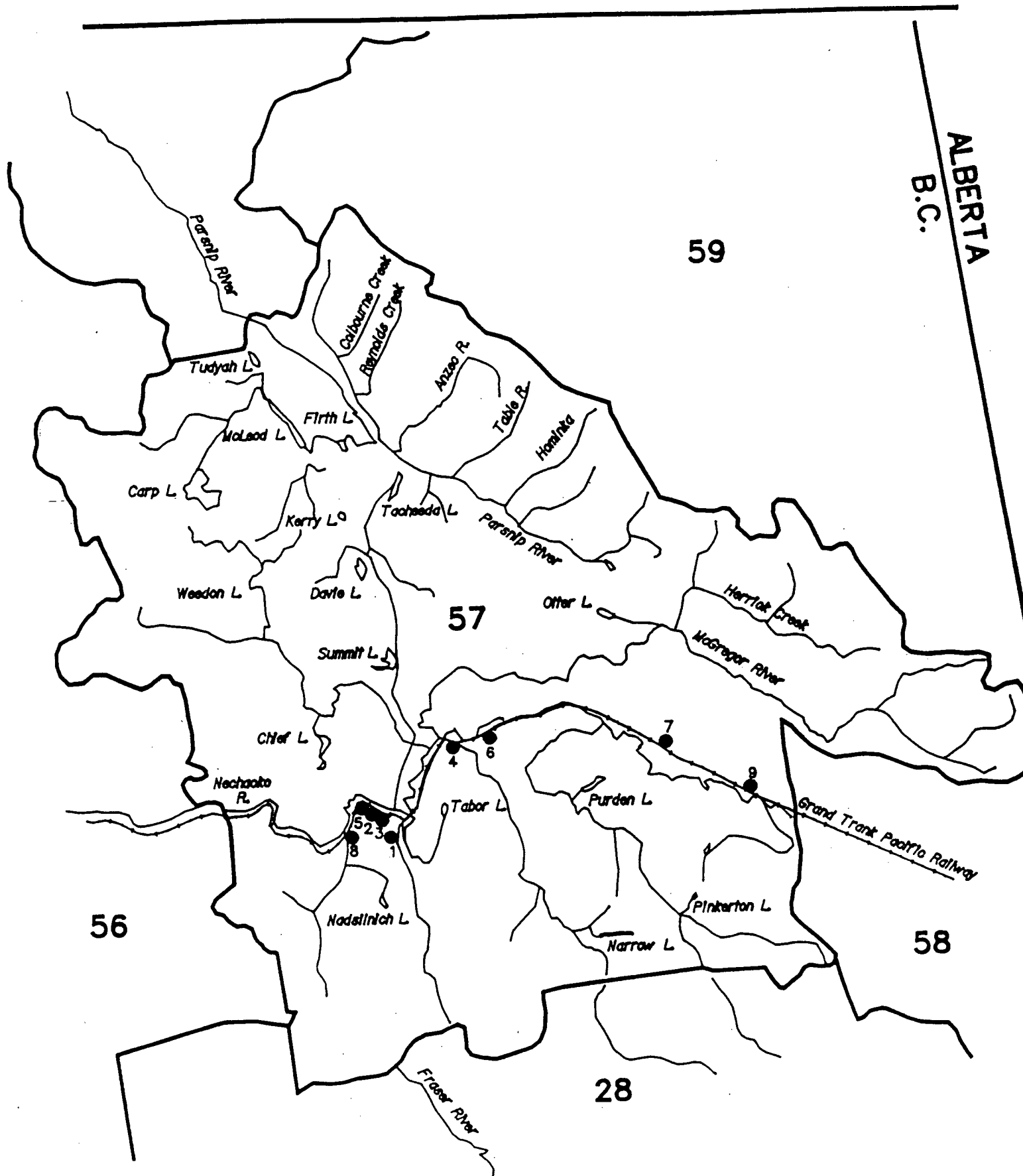
⁶⁷ Ibid., 1945.

concerns some schools would not continue to exist, or the community leaders were not appropriate or it made their job just a bit easier.

The evidence also suggests the inspectors of the region in conjunction with Prince George's boosters were actively supporting a local movement for consolidation to extend an opportunity for high school education to rural students. The town boosters of Prince George actively supported plans for a new high school with an expanded curriculum because it supported their dream of Prince George as a regional centre. What was needed was a plan, a new way of thinking that would break the constraints holding back complete consolidation.

SCHOOLS ESTABLISHED IN SCHOOL DISTRICT 57, 1911 - 1920

56



● *Schools Established*

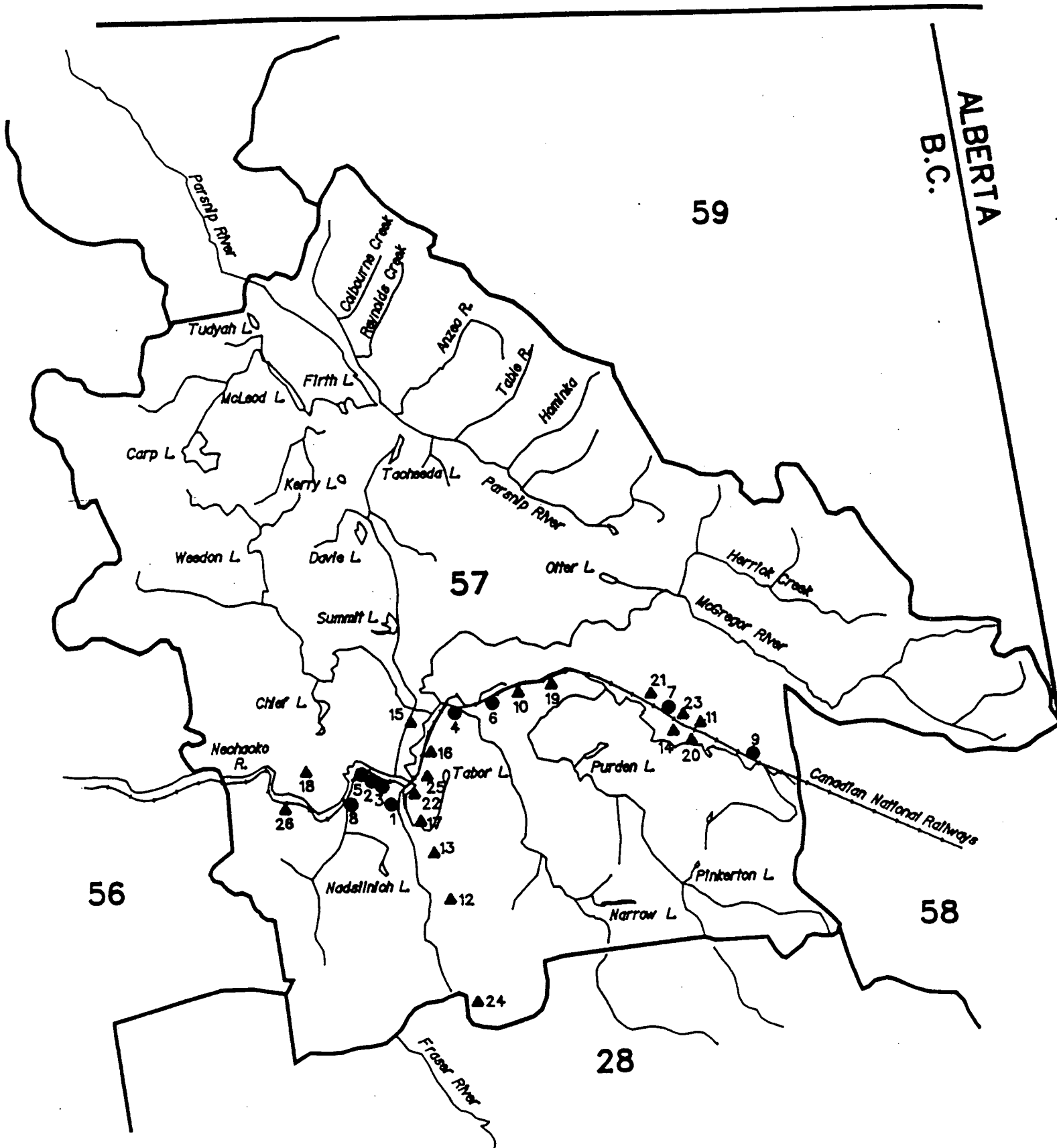
in

School District 57, 1911 - 1920

| | | |
|----|---------------------|------|
| 1) | South Fort George | 1911 |
| 2) | Central Fort George | 1912 |
| 3) | Prince George | 1914 |
| 4) | Willow River | 1915 |
| 5) | Beaverly | 1919 |
| 6) | Giscome | 1919 |
| 7) | Hutton | 1919 |
| 8) | Mud River | 1920 |
| 9) | Penny | 1920 |

SPREAD OF SCHOOLS IN SCHOOL DISTRICT 57, 1911 - 1930

58



Spread of Schools

in

School District 57, 1911 - 1930

● Previous Schools Established 1911 - 1920

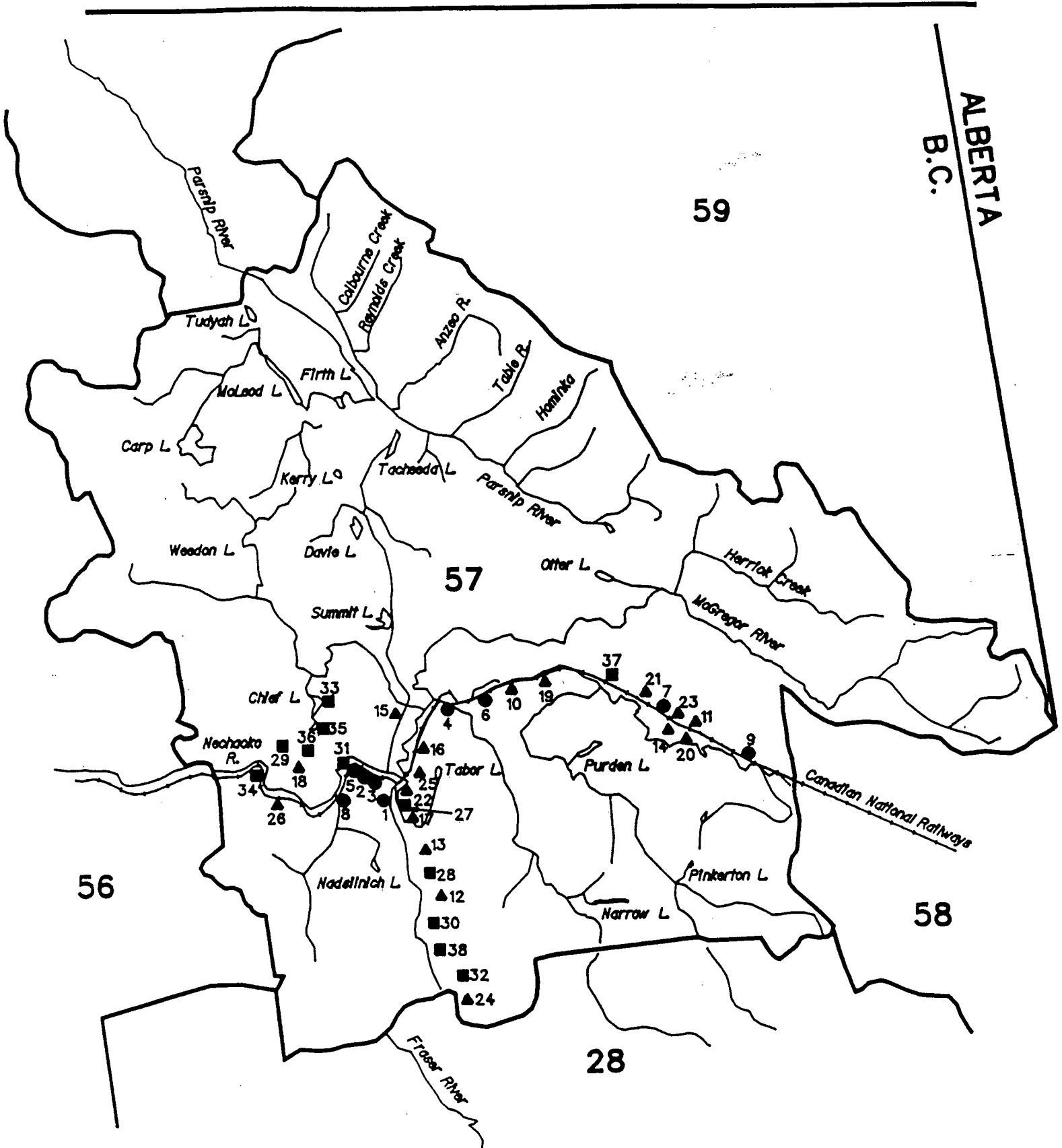
| | | |
|----|---------------------|------|
| 1) | South Fort George | 1911 |
| 2) | Central Fort George | 1912 |
| 3) | Prince George | 1914 |
| 4) | Willow River | 1915 |
| 5) | Beaverly | 1919 |
| 6) | Giscome | 1919 |
| 7) | Hutton | 1919 |
| 8) | Mud River | 1920 |
| 9) | Penny | 1920 |

▲ Previous Schools Established 1921 - 1930

| | | |
|-----|-----------------|------|
| 10) | Aleza Lake | 1921 |
| 11) | Longworth | 1921 |
| 12) | Stone Creek | 1921 |
| 13) | Canyon Creek | 1922 |
| 14) | Newlands | 1923 |
| 15) | Salmon River | 1924 |
| 16) | Shelly | 1924 |
| 17) | Tabor Creek | 1925 |
| 18) | Reid Lake | 1926 |
| 19) | Fraser Flats | 1927 |
| 20) | Longworth South | 1927 |
| 21) | Sinclair Hills | 1927 |
| 22) | Thompson | 1927 |
| 23) | Newlands North | 1929 |
| 24) | Strathnaver | 1929 |
| 25) | Ferndale | 1930 |
| 26) | Bednesti | 1930 |

SPREAD OF SCHOOLS IN SCHOOL DISTRICT 57, 1911- 1940

60



Spread of Schools

in

School District 57, 1911 - 1940

● Previous Schools Established 1911 - 1920

| | | |
|----|---------------------|------|
| 1) | South Fort George | 1911 |
| 2) | Central Fort George | 1912 |
| 3) | Prince George | 1914 |
| 4) | Willow River | 1915 |
| 5) | Beaverly | 1919 |
| 6) | Giscome | 1919 |
| 7) | Hutton | 1919 |
| 8) | Mud River | 1920 |
| 9) | Penny | 1920 |

▲ Previous Schools Established 1921 - 1930

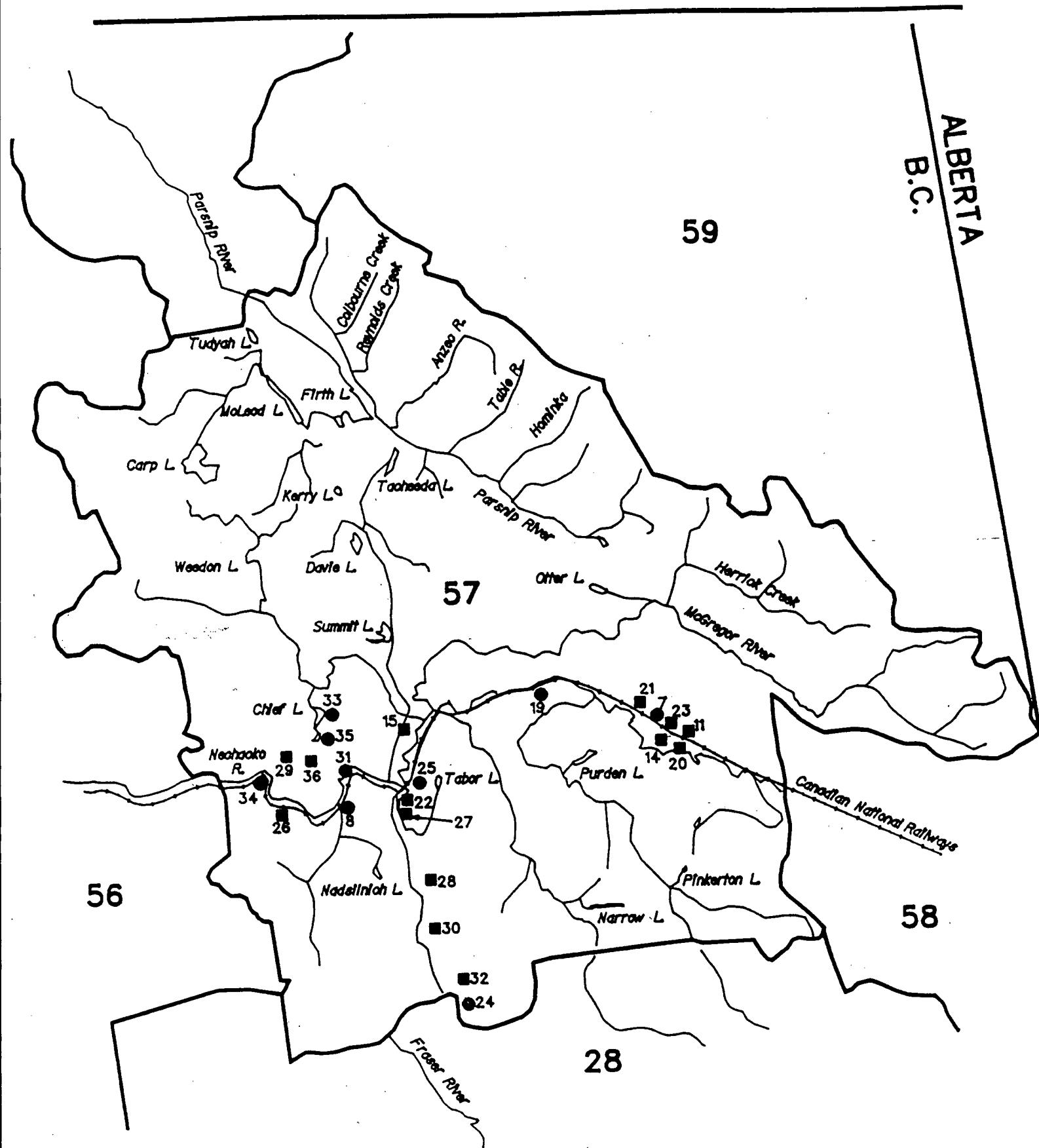
| | | |
|-----|-----------------|------|
| 10) | Aleza Lake | 1921 |
| 11) | Longworth | 1921 |
| 12) | Stone Creek | 1921 |
| 13) | Canyon Creek | 1922 |
| 14) | Newlands | 1923 |
| 15) | Salmon River | 1924 |
| 16) | Shelly | 1924 |
| 17) | Tabor Creek | 1925 |
| 18) | Reid Lake | 1926 |
| 19) | Fraser Flats | 1927 |
| 20) | Longworth South | 1927 |
| 21) | Sinclair Mills | 1927 |
| 22) | Thompson | 1927 |
| 23) | Newlands North | 1929 |
| 24) | Strathnaver | 1929 |
| 25) | Ferndale | 1930 |
| 26) | Bednesti | 1930 |

■ Schools Established 1931 - 1939

| | | |
|-----|--------------------|------|
| 27) | Cale Creek | 1931 |
| 28) | Camp Creek | 1931 |
| 29) | Sylvan Glade | 1931 |
| 30) | Canyon Creek | 1932 |
| 31) | Cranbrook Mills | 1932 |
| 32) | Fort George Canyon | 1932 |
| 33) | Chief Lake | 1933 |
| 34) | Isle Pierre | 1933 |
| 35) | Crescent Lake | 1937 |
| 36) | Ness Lake | 1937 |
| 37) | Hansard | 1939 |
| 38) | Woodpecker | 1939 |

OFFICIAL TRUSTEESHIPS AND SCHOOL CLOSED IN 1945

63



Official Trusteeships and Schools Closed in 1945

● Official Trusteeships

| | | |
|-----|-----------------|------|
| 8) | Mud River | 1920 |
| 15) | Salmon River | 1924 |
| 19) | Fraser Flats | 1927 |
| 21) | Sinclair Mills | 1927 |
| 24) | Strathnaver | 1930 |
| 25) | Ferndale | 1930 |
| 31) | Cranbrook Mills | 1932 |
| 33) | Chief Lake | 1933 |
| 34) | Isle Pierre | 1933 |
| 35) | Crescent Lake | 1937 |

■ Schools Closed

| | | | |
|-----|--------------------|------|-----------|
| 7) | Hutton | 1919 | |
| 14) | Newlands United | 1923 | 14 and 23 |
| 20) | Longworth United | 1921 | 11 and 22 |
| 26) | Bednesti | 1930 | |
| 27) | Cale Creek | 1931 | |
| 28) | Camp Creek | 1931 | |
| 29) | Syvan Glade | 1931 | |
| 30) | Canyon Creek | 1932 | |
| 32) | Fort George Canyon | 1932 | |
| 36) | Ness Lake | 1935 | |

Chapter III: The Cameron Report

Responding to the increasingly vociferous outcries of the public and concerns expressed by education personnel, such as inspectors, the government had to do something about education in BC. The problems of rural education in the 1920s outlined in the Putman-Weir Report continued into the 1940s and were compounded by the public's desire for more secondary education across the province. In rural districts, too small and too poor to implement secondary programs, the education of rural students often ended at the local elementary school; an obvious lack of equal opportunity if societal standards dictated a high school education was necessary for a decent job. Educational funding, all groups believed, was part of the problem. Provincial authorities were concerned the rural districts continued to be funded totally or almost totally by the government with little betterment in conditions or programs. The public's concern centered around equality of burden. Provincial funding had dropped to about 30 percent of the educational bill leaving those who could afford the least to pay the largest portion. The provincial share paid through flat grants that did not take into account local factors created even wider disparities between urban and rural school districts. The third concern was the problem of administrative breakdown. Provincial authorities were concerned that 30 percent of the school districts across the province were controlled directly by the Department of Education through its agents, usually the local inspector. The public was suspicious of the government's intentions. H.B. King's 1935 recommendation that school boards be abolished in favour of a centralized administration was fresh in their minds. During the war years the government had undertaken a series of regional consolidations that appeared successful, but eliminated the public voice in the operation of the local schools.

In November 1944 the Liberal-Conservative coalition government of Premier John Hart was forced to take action and appointed Dr. Maxwell Cameron to be a one-man commission of inquiry

to investigate and make recommendations regarding the resources, responsibilities, and method of administering the school districts of BC. As with past reports, the political conditions of the era determined the inception of the commission. Faced with an imminent election and a resurgent and increasingly strident CCF party, Premier Hart, an astute politician, probably assumed his maneuvers to oust Pattullo from the Liberal party leadership had cost him politically, especially in the interior of the province. Hart also recognized that education would play a key role in the upcoming election. One could hypothesize the appointment of Cameron was a political maneuver to give a high profile to the government with the possibility of disowning the report with minimal political effect should the report be unacceptable.

Cameron's appointment was a "safe investment" for the government. An acknowledged specialist in educational financing, Cameron had written enough, it could be assumed, for both the Hart government and progressive educators in the government to know approximately what he would recommend. Educated in the lineage of Thorndike and Sandiford, a member of the UBC faculty, and well-known to all progressive educators for his specialty, he was most definitely a member of the progressive educational network.¹

When Cameron's report was released both the government and progressive educators could not have been happier. He virtually ignored the submissions and instead relied on the insights and recommendations of local officials. His recommendations, cast in progressive thought, found compromise between centralization and local autonomy that instituted an acceptable level of equality of opportunity and complete educational programs across the province.

¹ Thomas Fleming, "'Our Boys in the Field': School Inspectors, Superintendents and the Changing Character of School Leadership in British Columbia," in *Schools In The West: Essays in Canadian Educational History*, eds. Nancy M. Sheehan, J. Donald Wilson and David C. Jones (Calgary: Detselig Press, 1986), 285-203. Further research into the changing role of educational leadership can be found in Thomas Fleming, "'In the Imperial Age and After': Patterns of British Columbia School Leadership and the Institution of the Superintendency 1840-1994," *BC Studies* (Spring 1989), 50-76.

The man appointed by the government to lead it out of its educational malaise was Maxwell Cameron. Born in Ontario, Cameron's family moved west where he received his elementary schooling in Calgary, and secondary schooling in Nelson, BC. Cameron graduated from the University of British Columbia in 1927 and completed his teacher training a year later, also at UBC. He then joined the staff of the Powell River High School where he remained until 1933, completing his public school teaching career as Principal, well aware of the problems of rural education in BC. During these same years he also completed his Master of Arts in Education degree at UBC.

From 1933 to 1939, Cameron's life revolved around the campus of the University of Toronto as a doctoral student and research assistant in the Department of Education under the leadership of Peter Sandiford. Cameron and Sandiford worked closely during these years. Sandiford's influence is most prominent in Cameron's writing style and methods of analysis. His in-depth use of tables, charts and statistics, and use of averages as comparisons, is reflective of Sandiford's style. In 1939 Cameron left his research position at the University of Toronto to take a position in the faculty of Arts at UBC, and later became a professor in the Department of Education.

Cameron became the country's leading expert on the topic of financing public education. His thesis, "Financing Education in Ontario" and two other studies on educational financing: "Property Taxation and School Financing" for the Canada Newfoundland Educational Association, and "Financing and Administration of Education in English-speaking Countries" for the Ontario Secondary Teachers' Association were seminal works. The latter two were less dogmatic than his thesis, but continued to outline Cameron's original arguments for financial reform of education.

Beginning in Cameron's thesis and continuing in all of his articles, it is apparent that his overriding concern is the problem of equality of opportunity. To obtain equality of opportunity, the rights of the local school districts had to be balanced against the needs of society to ensure an educated populace. To Cameron, financial structures could create equality of opportunity through central

administrations, or dissuade equality by the promotion of local autonomy. The problem was the province controlled and regulated all of the wrong factors affecting educational financing.² The provinces regulated texts and curricula while the essential financial details such as teachers' salaries, loans, operating policies, and general business were left to the uncontrolled actions of local administrations. To Cameron, the roles should be reversed. The inequality of some citizens inevitably affected the whole of society and the imposition of centralized financing was necessary to secure equality for the protection of all citizens.³ In essence, although Cameron outwardly crusaded for what seemed like mere financial reforms, he was in fact mirroring the sentiments of a broader perspective of progressive thought.⁴ Cameron was concerned with how much local autonomy could be retained and for what purpose. In his thesis he bluntly stated:

It may be that much English, American and Canadian defense of local administrations is mere arguing after the fact, mere rationalization of an already existing situation.local administrations were not necessary for freedom and flexibility. Perhaps, local school committees with advisory powers only, would ensure sufficient attention to local needs ... A centralized administration, provincial or perhaps national, could guarantee something approaching an equal opportunity to every child.⁵

It was also clear to Cameron that complete financial control could not rest with either the central or the local authorities. Total provincial support of education would bring out the extravagance of the local people. He noted, "It must be to the financial advantage of the locality to ensure prudence in spending the school's money."⁶ Complete local control of finances on the other hand was

² Maxwell Cameron, "The Financing of Education in Ontario," University of Toronto. Department of Educational Research Bulletin, no. 7, 1936, 19.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Douglas Owsram, The Government Generation: Canadian Intellectuals and the State 1900-1945 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), passim.

⁵ Cameron, "Financing Education."

⁶ Ibid., 20.

unreasonable since localities varied greatly in the ability to support education; creating irregularities of opportunity. The only option to Cameron was a shared responsibility that affirmed equal opportunity, equalized financial burden, and guaranteed financial prudence.

The difference in local conditions and the necessity for simplicity and ease of administration dictated, to Cameron, that the educational program had to be defined in financial terms not service.⁷ Grants under this condition would shift the tax burden between local and provincial governments to account more for the ability to pay and affirm equality of opportunity. The grant would be equal to the recognized costs of a minimum program such as heat, light and supplies less the product of a standard rate of local taxation. By doing so the local boards would be forced from a position of local complacency to a position of comparison between districts in order to obtain equality of opportunity.⁸ At the same time, prudent management would be secured because discretionary expenditures over and above the line of equality would have to involve local sacrifice.

Cameron's financial scheme outlined in his thesis was a breakthrough for educators concerned with equality of opportunity. Pre-Depression educators had thought of equality of opportunity in terms of service, courses, curriculum and programs. Cameron's plan reversed the roles of the state and local administrations. The state would now define equality in financial terms that would provide local administrations with incentives, through local taxation and grants, to ensure equality. Cameron's ingenuity in educational financing was his recognition that equality of opportunity had to be matched with equality of burden through the use of larger taxation units. Cameron believed the ideal unit was the township because its boundaries were recognized by the people and its size tended to equalize assessments between rural and urban land. Educationally, townships contained a school population large enough to support a secondary education and supervisory officer.

⁷Ibid., 26.

⁸Ibid., 35.

The contemporary documents indicate there was no opposition to Cameron's appointment. The Premier's Papers indicate there was considerable discussion between Premier Hart and the Minister of Education H. G. T. Perry concerning Cameron's mandate. Hart wanted a narrow focus limited to three areas: the present responsibilities, resources, and the method of administration of the school districts. Perry wanted a wider focus including topics such as adult education, teacher training, health programmes, the expansion of vocational and technical training to Vancouver Island and the Interior, the development of visual and radio aids, and the education of atypical children.⁹ The cabinet rejected Perry's proposal in favour of Premier Hart's narrow focus.

The reasons for the narrow focus were part of the politics of the day. Hart's cabinet could best be described as a war cabinet of Liberals and Conservatives preparing to fight a major election against a resurgent CCF party. Education was a major public issue, especially in the Interior, and the political management of the issue was of great concern to the Hart government. The Hart coalition was aware of the fact that educational financing was of prime importance to the rural electorate.¹⁰ As an educational expert Cameron drew commendable press coverage for the government in need of every advantage. The press release from the Premier's office touted Cameron's knowledge of educational financing and Hart further noted, "a Commission to survey the cost of education had been deferred until such time as the most competent person could be secured to undertake the task."¹¹

Was Cameron the most competent candidate, or was his appointment political management of the issue? Cameron did have the academic credentials, but William Plenderleith, an inspector in the education department, had significant experience in school consolidation. By 1945, Plenderleith had

⁹ Letter from H.G.T. Perry to Premier Hart, 21 November 1944, Premiers Papers, BCARS.

¹⁰ Memorandum from Premier Hart to H.G.T. Perry, 16 November 1944, Premiers Papers, BCARS.

¹¹ Press Release, Premiers Papers, BCARS. Cameron's stature as an expert and value to the Hart government should not be underrated. A committee had worked through the summer of 1943 to solve the educational problems of rural schools and recommended consolidation of the districts approximating Cameron's recommendations. They left the financial aspects up to the government.

supervised three major consolidations in BC: Peace River, Matsqui, Sumas and Abbotsford and Nanaimo Ladysmith. As well he had authored New Brunswick's study of school consolidation in 1935. Why was Plenderleith not chosen? One possible reason is that he did not meet the profile of the government expert that emerged previous to and during the war.¹² Plenderleith was a career civil servant, not an academic called into government service. There may have been some concern Plenderleith could not do the job. Plenderleith reorganized consolidated school districts, but had no provincial overview which Cameron excelled in. Another possible reason reinforces the hypothesis the government might want to distance itself from the report. Two of Plenderleith's experiences at consolidation had created local controversy.¹³ Naming Plenderleith to head the commission would be a relationship the coalition government could ill afford.

Both the government and Cameron misjudged the public's interest in the Commission. Cameron expected the Commission to be office-bound, holding hearings in the southern part of the province. The public's interest forced Cameron to write Hart in December 1944 suggesting the venue of hearings should be widened.¹⁴ For the next four months Cameron's life ran at a hectic pace. Between 30 January 1945 and 20 April 1945 he held twenty separate public hearings in all regions of the province, listening to sixty-three of the seventy-five briefs filed with the commission. The variety of organizations that filed briefs is indicative of the wide public interest. Fifteen briefs were submitted from city, municipal and district governments, thirteen from industrial and agricultural organizations and twenty-two of the briefs were from school boards.

The briefs covered all the contentious issues that had plagued the Department and the

¹² Douglas Owsram, *The Government Generation: Canadian Intellectuals and the State 1900-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), passim.

¹³ The role of William Plenderleith in the controversial consolidation of the Peace River school districts is found in Alan H. Child's article, "A Little Tempest: Public Reaction to the Formation of a Large Educational Unit in the Peace River District of British Columbia." And his role in the Matsqui, Sumas, Abbotsford consolidation is found in Alan Child's article, "Herbert B. King, Administrative Idealist."

¹⁴ Letter from Cameron to Hart, 5 December 1944, Premiers Papers, BCARS.

school districts: finances, grants, teachers, and boards. There was no unanimity as to how to solve the problems of educational financing. The majority of submissions recognized that the power of local taxation, mill rates and assessments were part of the problem. The common complaint of all of the briefs was the steady decline in the government's financial contribution to public education through the decades of the 1930s and 1940s, forcing local boards to pick up the shortfall. The provincial government had to contribute more. How much more was the contentious issue.

The solutions the briefs offered formed two camps. The briefs of the metropolitan areas of the province and the provincial organizations and rural regions, although separate organizations, were similar enough to suggest a cross pollination of beliefs. The Vancouver School Board, representative of the metropolitan views of the province, called for increased powers of taxation at the local level of government to tax the wealth of the community through the broadest possible tax base in an equitable and universally applied manner.¹⁵ The other camp was composed of municipal districts and unincorporated areas. With dissimilar methods of taxation influenced by the single tax theory, this camp's briefs prescribed a range of solutions from generally increased provincial grants to complete government financing. Chilliwack for instance demanded that agricultural land be relieved of educational taxes, and that grants be increased, equalizing costs to a basic standard throughout the province.¹⁶ Smithers and Quesnel shared the same view: real property should be relieved of the burden of taxation and costs better divided between the provincial and local governments.¹⁷ Prince Rupert suggested school financing should be through an equalization fund, while Smithers suggested school financing should be handled by a uniform mill rate.¹⁸

The BC Parent-Teachers' Association recommended that the provincial government

¹⁵ Brief to the British Columbia Commission of Inquiry into Educational Finance, 1945, BCARS.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

assume 50 percent of educational costs immediately, leading to full funding of a minimum program.¹⁹ The BC School Trustees Association, indirectly representing the ratepayers, chided the government for the reduction of grants and the removal of para-mutual and liquor profits from district budgets. They insisted that property should be relieved of taxation for educational purposes. Only a moderate share should be raised locally, although they never mentioned how, joining provincial and local governments as partners in the educational enterprise.²⁰ The BC Federation of Agriculture's brief was similar to the BCSTA. Education costs, the Federation believed, should be removed from land and personal property, and taken instead from the consolidated revenue of the province. It was the government's responsibility to locate sources of revenue to supplement the consolidated fund.²¹

The problem of teacher retention, a concern to rural districts especially, again divided the submissions into camps. Both rural and urban camps agreed low salaries made it difficult to attract and retain quality people. There was common agreement this was partly due to the wage freeze during the war. The urban view, represented by the Vancouver Board of Trade, recognized the importance of a reasonable minimum salary for teachers to ensure that teaching did not become a stepping stone toward more lucrative employment. The Board suggested the maximum salary become the minimum. With a reasonable minimum salary, and annual and periodic increments, quality personnel would be attracted and retained. In the same vein the Vancouver School Board suggested that the per teacher grant should be based on a percentage of the teacher's salary.²²

The rural districts were far more strident in their views regarding teacher retention, because they bore the brunt of the problem. The BC School Trustees noted that the grant system as it as structured was unsound. It bore no relationship to the salaries necessary to recruit and keep

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

satisfactory personnel.²³ Most of the organizations recommended a salary scale to help retain teachers in particular, in the rural districts. The BCTA recommended that the province-wide salary scale be adjusted to zones in order to minimize competition for teachers from one area to another²⁴. The Peace River Farmers felt the Department of Education should pay teachers' salaries from monies raised by general revenues. A more common plea, expressed by the Smithers District, was to establish teachers' salaries by zone²⁵.

The most contentious issue was district consolidation and reduced local control. All of the briefs that dealt with the issue came from outside the metropolitan areas. There were few that outrightly dismissed any type of consolidation; most revolved around the degree of local control. The more moderate of briefs, exemplified by the Smithers Committee of Educational Finance, called only for an investigation into the possible effects of consolidation.²⁶ The City of Port Coquitlam, in their submission, was also conciliatory, noting "that local control was, perhaps, doing more harm than good."²⁷ They further stated:

We cannot agree that centralized control and administration, to quote a former survey of the school system, be more Prussian than British in its essential characteristics. Neither do we feel that education would thereby necessarily become marred in the slough of political corruption.²⁸

The Cloverdale Ratepayers Association expressed best the other side of the argument regarding local control. In their submission to Cameron they stated:

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

The school board or trustee system is ineffective, obsolete, cumbersome, overlapping in some cases, and conducive to other forms of delinquency. It should be abolished and replaced with some system of school management, even if a one-man system of school management. ...The school district could be united and handled as one unit in the interests of economy by a large, competent administration. The day of local autonomy should be disregarded.²⁹

The Quesnel Board of Trade echoed the sentiments of the Cloverdale Ratepayers. They suggested a framework of one big school district to simplify the problems of financing through total centralization.³⁰ The briefs of other associations did not view consolidation as a panacea. The BC Parent-Teacher Association merely noted that there should be a rapid extension of larger administrative units only if the Department thought they were valuable.³¹ The BC Federation of Agriculture recommended consolidation as a cost-cutting measure, while the BC School Trustees were understandably silent on the issue given such a recommendation would terminate the positions of many of its members.

The most virulent attack against consolidation came from the Peace River. Bitter feelings regarding the methods used to consolidate the districts in the 1930's were still very much in evidence in 1945. The Central Board of the Peace River Block of the BC District of the Alberta Farmers Union, in their submission, attacked the past practices of the Department of Education and demanded the return of their democratic rights and privileges. The submission further stated,

The Department of Education should forsake the treachery and force it employed, when it formed the Peace River District... The dictatorial attitude of the Department be changed to an attitude of cooperation with the farmers of the Peace River... The farmers, should determine the boundaries of the school units and handle their own affairs in such a manner as to be open to the scrutiny of the ratepayers... the inspector's role should be just that.³²

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

The sentiment of the brief must have been prevalent throughout the region. Mrs. Dumont, secretary of the Alberta Farmers' Union of the Peace River Block, in a letter thanking Mr. T. G. Carter, a member of the Union, for his presentation to the Commission added:

You [Carter] must be aware of the Nazi methods employed to take over the administration of our schools by the Official Trustee. I can assure you that this union, and also with the backing of the citizens, won't cease trying to regain these rights until that is a true fact.³³

Of the briefs submitted, the position of the BCTF was closest to Cameron's publications. For several years a standing committee on Larger Administrative Units had been formulating the BCTF's policies regarding educational financing and consolidation and had probably read Cameron's works. The BCTF had been on record for years that school districts should be disbanded in favour of Larger Administrative Units. The BCTF's brief stated:

the initiative for such action had to come from the government, since local boards were steeped in provincialism, jealousies and suspicion. The creation of appropriate districts would remove the glaring inequalities of mill rates, redistributing costs between districts and the provincial treasury.³⁴

The BCTF believed that new districts should share a standard mill rate on assessed land and 50 percent on the assessed value of improvements.³⁵

In spite of its size, a mere ninety-seven pages of text, Cameron's report had more impact on BC's educational system than any of the reports preceding it.³⁶ Extremely incisive, the report concentrated on the financial state of affairs of the school districts that often clouded the theme of the report: should centralization proceed, be arrested or be reversed.³⁷ It was Cameron's contention that,

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Smith, "What Do You Know About Educational Finance," *The BC Teacher*, December 1960, 150.

³⁷ Cameron, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry Into Educational Finance* (Victoria: King's Printer, 1945), 8.

while the educational system may have been decentralized, the Department had been forced in the 1930's to wield greater power. Centralization had increased because local boards had abrogated their responsibilities, forcing the installation of Official Trustees and Large Administrative Units.³⁸

Cameron did not venture to explain what had created this state of affairs.

Cameron found the provincial government contributed a little less than a third to public education and the localities a little more than two-thirds to public education.³⁹ In effect, the cost of education was being borne by those who could least afford it. When Cameron investigated the local assessment system, he found a confusing system with a myriad of mill rates. Assessment rates on real property ranged from 40 to 128 percent of true value, indicative that the municipalities were a law unto themselves. Taxation on improvements in the cities were limited to 50 percent, municipalities at 75 percent, but unorganized territory could tax improvements to 100 percent of their value. Machinery and fixtures were improvements in municipalities, but personal property in unorganized territory. Livestock could be taxed as an improvement in unorganized areas, but the produce from orchards was exempt. This situation was further complicated by an antiquated assessment process, and sometimes deceptive practices that bordered on corruption. With often under-staffed offices and poorly licensed personnel, assessment was sometimes done by inspection, but more often by extrapolation from past tax rates. Some rates were still based on the pre-World War I land boom, others had been purposely decreased to obtain a larger school grant.⁴⁰

The effect of these irregularities was twofold. With so many school districts, each with its own assessment rate, neighbours, communities and often sections of towns were separated creating dissension within and between the districts.⁴¹ These irregularities also produced rigid municipal

³⁸ Ibid., 7-8.

³⁹ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁰ Moffat interview, August 1992.

⁴¹ Cameron, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry," 21.

budgets that were not able to support rapidly rising educational costs at the end of the war regardless of the size of the government grant.⁴² Without visiting a classroom, Cameron said he could easily determine that there were wide differences in the quality of schooling across the province without any idea of a locality's ability to pay.⁴³ Conditions were most severe in the rural areas of the province that in 1943 accounted for about 25,000 students scattered across 99 percent of BC with very little assessable property.

To Cameron, the main plight of the rural school districts was the lack of educational opportunities and the inequity of burden. In over one-third of these districts, the government grant made up three-quarters of the schools' expenditures; in one-fifth, the grant accounted for four-fifths of the schools' expenditures. With over 500 rural districts with varying assessment rates, discontent and opposition to school expenditures was endemic, not from burden, but because the neighbour down the road in another district paid less.⁴⁴

Cameron's recommendations that "slaughtered the sacred cows of municipal fragmentation" were, as Smith proposed, based upon equality of burden and opportunity.⁴⁵ Smith did not comprehend that encompassed in this notion of equality was Cameron's dedication to the progressive ideals of the 1940s which included an interpretation of the role of the state. The pre-depression belief the state was an organic outcome of society was still evident in many submissions to the commission. Many submissions also argued that under Section 93 of the British North America Act the province should completely finance education because this section gave the province complete control of education. Cameron completely rejected this argument and interpreted Section 93 to mean provincial responsibility lay simply as guarantor of equality.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 27.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁵ Smith, "What Do You Know About Educational Finance?", 7.

[The people through their provincial government] . . . shall see to it, as far as Nature permits, every child shall have a chance to obtain an adequate schooling, and that the cost of this schooling shall be apportioned with reasonable fairness.⁴⁶

The arguments for and against centralization and decentralization were placed on a different footing. The government was now the arbiter between centralization and decentralization, equality and local autonomy. The state, under these circumstances, was not an organic outcome, but mechanistic; to be tinkered with to set acceptable standards at the local level.⁴⁷ Cameron also realized the government would be the arbiter between equality and democracy when he succinctly stated:

if centralization brings about a much greater degree of equalization than decentralization can, it may be said that it is the more democratic. However, because local control results in greater public interest, because it enlists the voluntary services of an array of citizens and because the local people can feel that in part they possess the schools . . . , it may be proper to call decentralization more democratic.⁴⁸

This recognition that "ownership" by the local people was an essential ingredient of public education placed a different emphasis on the use of democracy, more in keeping with the interpretation of the Peace River residents.

Cameron was very forceful regarding the three recommendations of his report. All three had to be accepted; any instituted separately was untenable. Rather than a uniform tax base across individual districts, Cameron recommended a standard mill rate and that a provincial agency be created to supervise property assessment. This agency would assess property provincially to rid the assessment process of local politics, give a broader tax base and standardize mill rates on land and improvements.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 36.

⁴⁷ Douglas Owsram, The Government Generation: Canadian Intellectuals and the State 1900-1945 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), passim.

⁴⁸ Cameron, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry," 37.

Cameron recommended a provincial property tax rate of five mills on land and 75 percent on improvements. Five mills was not an arbitrary figure but the mill rates used by a majority of cities and municipalities that were expected to raise the local contribution of three and a quarter million dollars based on the 1943 tax rate.⁴⁹

The second pillar of Cameron's educational program was a revised grant system. The old grant system used assessments from 1935 to determine the size of individual grants to districts. There was no attempt also at equalization between the urban rich and the rural poor districts and no consideration given in the grant system for major costs such as heat, light and supplies. Since four-fifths of the one-room districts had assessments lower than \$100,000 they suffered inordinately.⁵⁰ The common suggestion of the briefs submitted to the commission was for the Province to bear just over half of the total cost of education for each district. Cameron flatly rejected this suggestion stating, "all constraints to prudent handling of public money would be removed."⁵¹

Instead Cameron returned to the salary grant system based on a provincial salary schedule. He probably chose this system because it was already understood by local boards in the cities and municipalities. Seventeen of the twenty-four municipalities and twenty-six of the thirty-three cities were already using salary schedules.⁵² Whether the recommended schedule was an accurate representation of the provincial scene is speculative. Cameron believed the question was irrelevant because "the Provincial schedule should follow current practice, not current practice the Provincial schedule."⁵³ He suggested later that it fell somewhere in the middle ground almost identical to the Okanagan Valley, in excess of the Fraser Valley, a good deal lower than the cities and superior to the rural areas where there

⁴⁹ Ibid., 54.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 58.

⁵¹ Ibid., 65.

⁵² Ibid., 66.

⁵³ Ibid., 74.

was no salary schedule.⁵⁴

The third pillar of Cameron's educational plan was the consolidation of the school districts. Without some form of prudent, local control his plans for the equalization of opportunity and burden were impossible. The conditions across the province were, not surprisingly, another patchwork. A combination of 649 rural, district municipalities, and city districts still voted money for school purposes. Besides the educational inadequacies, Cameron also believed the school districts had to be re-organized to curtail the breakdown of local administration. The meagre financial resources of the old districts created the local jealousies that discouraged trustees enough so that they abandoned their roles to official trustees. Larger districts would improve the financial resources by taxing all property in the district, increase economy and efficiency through the use of modern business management techniques, improve teacher retention through better working conditions, better supervision and the prospect of promotion and easier transfers, and remove local jealousies.⁵⁵ To Cameron, the new districts should be large enough and powerful enough that the work would be a challenge to the trustees and with the financial resources adequate for their responsibilities.⁵⁶

The boundaries of the new districts would not be as easy to justify since nine-tenths of the province was unorganized. The Union of British Columbia Municipalities acknowledged that municipal districts were not necessarily satisfactory for school districts considering that eleven of the fifty-seven had fewer than one thousand inhabitants. Two principles Cameron used in Ontario guided his division of British Columbia into new districts. They had to have an adequate school population to justify a complete educational program with no less than forty or fifty teachers. The district boundaries also had to be comprehensible to the local population, and wherever possible an economic entity or trading

⁵⁴ Speech by Maxwell Cameron to the British Columbia School Trustees Association, BCSTA Annual Report, December 1945.

⁵⁵ Cameron, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry," 83-84.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 85.

area.⁵⁷ Under this criterion the existing districts were reorganized into three categories. The first, including the new McBride district, east of Prince George, were sparsely populated and without consolidation lacked in most cases any secondary education facilities. Most were also operated by Official Trustees. The second group including Quesnel and Vanderhoof had more compact populations, natural centers and some provision for secondary education. The third group, including Prince George, contained more or less urban centers and municipalities. The populations were compacted around large centres and a system for the transportation of students was available or close to implementation. Cameron claimed these districts contained the best trustees in the province with a strong movement for enlargement.

Whether Cameron fully employed his own guidelines to demarcate all the districts is open to speculation. J.F.K. English, a contemporary inspector, noted that the districts were built around the existing secondary programs in the province.⁵⁸ English's grid of secondary education centres corresponds closely to Cameron's grid of economic trading centres. Indeed, sixty-six of the seventy-five new districts outlined by Cameron had adequate or limited secondary programs already in existence.⁵⁹ In the case of Prince George district, both scenarios are correct. Prince George had become sufficiently strong enough to develop a secondary program.

How the boundaries for the new districts were formulated was not mentioned in the report. In the case of the Prince George district, Cameron seems to have followed his principles. The boundary was approximately equidistant between Quesnel to the south, Vanderhoof to the west and McBride to the east. About sixty miles of the East Line as far as Penny, a major part of the city's trading area, was also incorporated into the district following the principle of economic entity. The boundary between districts was determined through consultation with leading citizens. Moffat recounted that

⁵⁷ Ibid., 86.

⁵⁸ J.F.K. English interview, BCARS.

⁵⁹ Cameron, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry," 90.

Cameron came back to Prince George to discuss the draft of his report with the trustees, particularly the proposed boundaries of the surrounding districts. Strathnaver to the south and Penny to the east were incorporated into the Prince George district although, as Cameron noted in his report with Penny, "enlightened opinions differ."⁶⁰ Wells-Barkerville was incorporated in the Quesnel district as Cameron noted because the mining properties were tentative; exactly the advice Moffat and the Prince George trustees gave him.⁶¹

There are three features of the Cameron Report which strike the reader. In its own systematic way it gives the reader an excellent picture of the provincial educational system in the mid-1940s. No other report had so graphically outlined the intricacies and decentralized nature of educational financing. Land values, assessment rates and grants buoyed the system, but without co-ordination between local and provincial officials political decisions had disastrous effects on schools and schooling. Secondly, the report overwhelms the reader with tables, charts and statistics, a new style of writing not seen in any educational report until Cameron and seldom used since. Thirdly, and Smith acknowledged this also, for all the submissions gathered as Cameron traversed the length and breadth of the province only the most general references were made to the submissions.⁶² Indeed, Cameron only referred to the submissions when they agreed with his general premises, and usually these were obtained in what he called informal discussions accompanying the public hearings.⁶³ Many other submissions that for instance suggested the outright provincial assumption of 50 percent or more of educational costs were ignored. Cameron also noted the public hearings and submissions "made it gratifyingly clear that public opinion . . . is ready for the enlargement of the school districts"⁶⁴, yet

⁶⁰ Ibid., 94.

⁶¹ Moffat interview, August 1992.

⁶² D.J.S. Smith, The Story of Educational Finance in British Columbia (Vancouver: British Columbia Teachers' Federation, 1968), 6.

⁶³ Cameron, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry," 37.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 85.

some submissions only asked for an investigation of the subject.

Why did the Cameron Report emphasize the financial aspects of the education system through charts, tables and statistics, and virtually ignore the recommendations of the public submissions? Why is the Cameron Report and Cameron's thesis, "Financing Education in Ontario", so strikingly similar in style, form and content despite dealing with two provinces in a ten-year time span? The similarities between the two reports is so striking as to make them inseparable. The Cameron Report was essentially the application of his thesis to the British Columbia scene. Local input, for Cameron, was unnecessary unless it confirmed or supported his original thesis. In both cases, Cameron rejected either total centralization or local autonomy in favour of shared responsibility and a reversal of the roles of provincial and local authorities which he viewed as the central problem to educational financing. Financial matters such as salaries, operating costs, and loans had to be controlled by the central administration if equality of opportunity was ever to be achieved. The local administrations under Cameron's scheme took a subservient role. As restructured units, the school districts would raise the local 50 percent of educational costs across a broader tax base. Equality of burden decreased local dissension to protect equality of opportunity. The new school districts would also protect the provincial governments purse strings through financial prudence.

The compromise between equality of opportunity and local autonomy, the Basic Provincial Program was strikingly similar to the Minimum Program in Cameron's thesis. In both the BC and Ontario plan, Cameron applied a modified Most Plan that used expenditure grants to determine a funding formula to cover basic costs. The BC plan was slightly more complex and used a flat grant that contributed about one-third on a per-pupil basis and the other two-thirds was covered by a teacher salary schedule. By fixing two-thirds of the minimum program to a salary schedule, Cameron ensured the minimum program was fixed at a low rate that acted as an incentive for competitiveness between districts.

Both of Cameron's reports illustrate the degree of influence and change in philosophy of the progressive movement.⁶⁵ The Depression challenged established institutions of government and the progressive view of how to effect change in society. Cameron's reports in Ontario and BC neither look nor read like the reports of Putman and Weir or King because Cameron's reports represent a new philosophy and agenda of the intellectual community. The economist and his language were increasingly used as a mode of explanation.⁶⁶ The fate of the individual was no longer one of personal choice but tied to the well-being of the whole of society. Society, to the progressives, had to act collectively to protect society from the privation of a few. The social programs that emerged at the end of the war were the actions of the progressives striving for the equality of individuals to ensure the well-being of the whole of society.

The Cameron Report focused on the question of equality of opportunity and burden. The provincial program envisioned by Cameron not only collectivized the activities of both provincial and local authorities, but also dispersed the burden equally through the use of revised grants, standardized mill rates, and consolidation. The provincial government as arbitrator determined the acceptable standards of equality of opportunity described in financial terms through the mill rate and grants. The local authorities in the consolidated districts were subservient to provincial authorities yet necessary to maintain public interest. They were given the political will and financial resources to institute educational programs that brought about equality of opportunity.

⁶⁵ The report is a provincial example of a far wider movement taking place across the country, throughout the war and after. World War II saw the expansion of governmental powers, expanded civil service, and the use of expert personnel. With the door opened progressive intellectuals were able to systematically intervene in the operation of the state to meet specific social and economic needs. The role of the state to the intellectuals was to implement collective social goals to enhance the potential of the individual. The frantic pace of social legislation that emerged at the end of the war was the result. For an explanation of the intellectual community at the federal level see Doug Owram's book, The Government Generation.

⁶⁶ Doug Owram, The Government Generation, 193.

Chapter IV: Implementation In the Prince George Region

The Cameron Report became a focus of attention for the provincial electorate and a central theme of the Coalition government's political platform for re-election in 1945. The contemporary records indicate that the drive for implementation of the report's recommendations came from the educational elite in the Department of Education and not from the floor of the legislature. The progressives in the department had in fact begun implementation before the revamped Public Schools Act had cleared third reading. New specialists, who had proven themselves in the provincial teaching and administrative ranks and understood the requisits for educational reform, were brought into the educational bureaucracy. So broad were the changes needed they covered the very core of provincial responsibilities.

Opposition was present, but was never able to articulate its position or form a united front. The Cameron Report was successfully implemented in Prince George because consolidation ran parallel to the aspirations of the town boosters. Consolidation was an opportunity for the city boosters to add to the existing infrastructure of central place to protect both public wealth and private fortunes. With positions of power and prestige the previously restrained initiative of the trustees was released as Cameron had projected.

The acceptance and implementation by the government of the Cameron Report was masked by the politics of the period. The importance of the report to Hart's re-election campaign is a matter of historical debate. F. T. Fairey, the future Superintendent of Education, claimed it was a major topic during the provincial election. Cameron's meetings throughout the Province stirred, what he called, "the will of the people" and the government was returned only after promising that the Cameron Report

would form the basis of legislation.¹ F. J. McRae, President of the BCTF, concurred with Fairey. The Cameron Report was a major topic throughout the province, particularly the Interior.² Premier Hart's acceptance of the report and declaration of full implementation if re-elected may have been the result of a sense of desperation the coalition felt.

Martin Robin does not consider specifically education or the Cameron Report to be a major issue in the 1945 provincial election. Instead the Cameron Report was part of a proficient campaign that spoke of the "big boom", new social legislation and increased public spending, "a light in every barn," financed by a burgeoning economy.³ The public was ready for this type of campaigning. Ten years of depression and five years of war had established a tone of change in the public. The world had advanced leaving many British Columbians behind. One of the changes was the necessity of secondary education; by 1945 the public viewed it as a prerequisite to a decent job.⁴

After the re-election of the coalition in October 1945 it seemed like the government benches looked forward to a relaxed session rather than one filled with bills promoting reconstruction. Major changes were expected in forest policies and liquor distribution yet the government chose the old policy of doing things in bits and pieces.⁵ The education bureaucracy was not so relaxed. George Weir, re-elected in 1945 and returned to the education portfolio, found the Cameron Report waiting for him. Weir was more interested in the broad scope of reform and legislation and left minor details to others.⁶

¹ F. T. Fairey, "The Implementation of the Cameron Report in British Columbia," Canadian Education, Vol. II no.1 (Oct., Nov., Dec., 1946), 83

² F. J. McRae, "President's Report", BC Teacher Vol. XXV no. 2 November 1945, 73.

³ Martin Robin, Pillars of Profit: The Company Province 1934-1972 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1973), 87.

⁴ Jean Barman, The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 299.

⁵ Robin, Pillars of Profit, 84.

⁶ J.F.K. English interview, BCARS.

This task fell to F. T. Fairey. Appointed in October 1945, Fairey replaced S. J. Willis as Deputy Minister.

Fairey was the epitome of Thomas Fleming's old boys' network in the department. Domineering and autocratic, he expected to be addressed as Colonel, in deference to the rank he held in World War I with the Irish Fusiliers. A self-proclaimed progressive and supporter of vocational education, he came up through the teaching ranks working in Quesnel, Victoria and Vancouver, finishing his teaching career as Vice-Principal of Vancouver Technical School. During World War II he was Regional Director of the Dominion Provincial War Emergency Training Program. The position of Deputy Minister opened in September when Willis tendered his resignation for October due to failing health. In spite of ill health Willis framed most of the necessary amendments to the Public Schools Act during his final days at the department.⁷

Colonel Fairey was not the only new appointment to the department. A new cadre of inspectors was also appointed during those months preceding consolidation. The entry criteria for inspectors had changed somewhat; military service was de-emphasized while ambition and educational attainments remained constants. More often men were chosen for their efforts and expertise in BCTF committees such as consolidation, salary scales or curriculum development.⁸ Many of the new inspectors chosen just before consolidation in 1946 show a surprising similarity of experiences. L. B. Stibbs was president of a local chapter of the BCTF, and Federation President through 1943 and 1944. In addition, Stibbs was the chairman of the Federation's Provincial Salary Committee and many of his suggestions on tax rates were embodied in the BCTF brief to the Cameron Commission. F. P. Levirs represented the East Kootenays on the Federation's executive. He was a member of many BCTF

⁷ Fairey, "The Implementation of the Cameron Report," 84.

⁸ Many issues of the BC Teacher contain congratulatory notes and brief biographies of new appointments to the Department of Education during the months before and after the Cameron Commission especially November 1945 and January 1946.

committees such as the Ferguson Memorial Award, Teacher Training and Certification Committee and the Larger Administrative Units Committee. C. E. Clay was an executive officer for the Okanagan Valley Teachers' Association for eight years and president for one. It is not surprising that both Stibbs and Levirs became inspectors of the newly organized school districts east and west of Prince George.

From October 1945 the impression left by the documentation is of the education department driving the government and using its authority in the school districts to institute consolidation. On 17 December 1945 before passage of the Bill, Fairey and Cameron conferred with the provincial inspectors to work out the details of re-organization and the legislation necessary to implement the Cameron Report. Fairey began the conference by saying, "Well, you fellows are faced with setting up these larger areas and this is what the department wants to have done."⁹ The inspectors, with their knowledge of local conditions, suggested modifications. At the end of the conference, the inspectors were instructed to return to their inspectorates to explain the department's plans to existing school boards and municipalities.

In January, 1946 in a lengthy memorandum Fairey outlined to Weir the steps necessary to implement the Cameron Report. The length and the contents indicate that many in the top echelons of government did not realize the total implications of the report, possibly even Weir who was fresh from the campaign trail. The memo acknowledged in the end the fact that the changes required were so drastic as to require the complete revision not only of the Public Schools Act, but also changes to the Municipal Act and the Taxation Act¹⁰.

The tasks of the department were enormous. The department was literally restructuring the basic segments of the provincial government's jurisdictions. Two hundred and sixty-three school boards and three hundred and eighty-five trusteeships had to be abolished and their assets and liabilities

⁹ J.F.K. English Interview, BCARS.

¹⁰ Memorandum from F.T. Fairey to G. M. Weir, 4 January 1946, Premiers Papers, BCARS.

transferred to seventy-five new school boards. In addition the machinery for the interim appointment and eventual election of the trustees to the new boards had to be established, including their respective temporary powers. The task of establishing the boundaries of the new districts proved to be intricate also. Cameron had only roughly outlined the new districts as lists; the actual boundaries had to be drawn in accordance with the topography of the country. A select committee of inspectors, district assessors and government agents were assigned the task using the guiding principle of accessibility of one part of a district to another.¹¹ These boundaries were then given a legal definition by the General Surveyor of the province.

The Department of Education could only estimate what the costs of the Cameron Report would be as the government assumed 50 percent of educational expenses. Only a rough approximation was possible until a province-wide system of assessment was organized that would simplify the problem of the new districts lying across 2,013 assessment areas. More significantly, no conclusive figures were possible until the taxation department established a new definition of improvements. The financial unknown the government was descending into was further revealed in a memo to Hart from the Deputy Minister of Finance in March 1946. He suggested revisions be made to the Bill already on the floor of the legislature. It was discovered that, given the present boundaries, there would likely be no appreciable tax relief to a number of districts, while in others the tax burden might increase without concurrent benefits in educational standards. In others the local portion raised would be greater than school expenditures.¹² This unexpected windfall resulted from the equalization of improvements between organized and unorganized territory. The machinery of sawmills, pulp mills, coal and metaliferous mines and railway right-of-ways would be taxed as improvements at 75 percent of their value. The Deputy Minister also stressed the necessity for the immediate appointment of a Commission of Supervision and Equalization to handle assessments. "Without the commission," he stated, "there

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Memorandum from Deputy Minister of Finance to Premier Hart, 16 March 1946, Premiers Papers, BCARS.

could be no guarantee that the provincial grants would be fixed equitably or that taxation of land would be spread across a school district in a uniform manner."¹³

The Department did know there would be significant expenses. Although the new districts faced little or no debt, they did face major school reconstruction costs from twenty years of neglect. The sentiment of personnel in the department was that the floodgates were to be opened, because the report recommended the government cover 50 percent of all construction costs. Fairey, in his memo, estimated that total costs could amount to \$1,500,000 for 1947 alone.¹⁴

Fairey's memo also commented on the method of implementation. "As a matter of policy it would be unwise not to attempt to put the plan into effect at once covering all the province and make adjustments later."¹⁵ Fairey's comments considered the problem of opposition to the plan. Consolidation could not be implemented piecemeal. Opposition would be less likely with no one group singled out for attention.

From the contemporary documents, unified opposition to the Cameron Report is not evident. One reason for this was the nature of government operations during the war years. In a war atmosphere, coalition governments had de-emphasized political conflict and emphasized patriotic zeal that labeled any form of opposition as unpatriotic if not treasonous.¹⁶ The re-election of the coalition

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ The fears of the financial implications of consolidation were not unjustified. Cameron alluded to this problem in his report. Increased education costs could easily gobble up the governments "much coveted seven million dollar annual surplus." Cameron, "Report of the Comission," 44. As early as July 1946 Harold Moffat, in a letter to the regional representative of the school board, outlined the plans for a new school at Strathnaver. Although the plans for this rural school emphasized low maintenance, and suitability to northern conditions, the specifications included tar and gravel roof, linoleum flooring, central heating and a brick facade making it "comparable with any classroom for comfort, light, sanitation, and convenience of the pupils," features unknown in any rural school at the time. School District #57 Archives.

Requests such as this and many others prompted a memo from Fairey to all inspectors in May 1947 imploring the inspectors to impress upon their boards the necessity of financial restraint. The "large rural districts", Fairey complained "incorporated in administrative areas have adopted the more expensive practices of the municipalities with which they are allied". Memorandum from F.T. Fairey to G. M. Weir, 4 January 1946, School District #57 Archives.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Owram, The Government Generation, 329.

government in BC continued to de-emphasize the adversarial role of political parties and emphasize the united front. Faced with this common front and no political arm, business and agricultural concerns that faced substantial increases in taxation continued to frame their opposition more as concerns or questions rather than outright opposition.

One of the first areas to express their anxiety was the mining and smelting industry in the Kootenays. The Nelson Daily News reported early in 1946 that the Nelson Board of Trade was aroused by the recommendations of the Cameron Report because business and industry were expecting heavier taxes as a result of the new definition of improvements and the inclusion of machinery outside the municipality.¹⁷ Both the Kimberly and Nelson Boards of Trade also wrote Premier Hart and demanded that the government inform the people of the nature and extent of the proposals, release statistics and explore other possibilities such as the Nelson Board of Trade's proposal that the government increase the subsidies to the districts.¹⁸

British Columbia's agricultural industry was no less concerned. Cameron's taxation recommendations threatened segments of the industry with significant tax increases. The BC Fruit Growers' Association urged the government to take immediate steps to redistribute the tax load "in keeping with our democratic age and British fair play."¹⁹ The Beef Growers' Association was supportive of the government's attempts to solve the problems of education. However, Cameron's recommendations threatened the membership with a 150 percent tax increase in unorganized areas without any accrual of educational benefits owing to their isolation.²⁰

There was also considerable bitterness amongst the trustees of the old districts. This

¹⁷ Nelson Daily News 15 February 1946, 2, cited from The Vancouver Sun, 19 February 1946.

¹⁸ Letter from the Kimberly Board of Trade and the Nelson Board of Trade to Premier Hart, 19 February 1946, Premiers Papers, BCARS.

¹⁹ Letter from the BC Fruit Growers Association to Premier Hart, 21 February 1946, Premiers Papers, BCARS.

²⁰ Letter from the Beef Cattle Growers Association of BC to Premier Hart, March 1946, Premiers Papers, BCARS.

frustration and bitterness at the loss of position or, as Harold Moffat referred to it, "the little frog in the big pond"²¹ is evident in the letters the Premier received during the early months of 1946. Many came from the Okanagan, an area with a considerably longer history of settlement that reinforced the parochial nature of the school districts. The Municipality of Coldstream wrote Hart in early 1946 to complain, as with many other districts, there had been no prior consultation regarding consolidation.²² In April 1946 Hart received a letter from W. A. C. Bennett and a petition from the residents of Peachland, Summerland, Westbank and Bear Creek requesting they be removed from the new Kelowna district before consolidation.²³ J. H. R. Mitchell, Secretary of the Pouce Coupe Chamber of Commerce, in a letter asked Hart to stop the transfer of the school board office to Dawson Creek.²⁴

Fairey and others in the Department of Education were most concerned with opposition from the larger, wealthier, established districts. In a memorandum to Fairey, in March 1946, C. B. Conway commented on Oak Bay's opposition to the union with Esquimalt and Saanich, two poorer districts. Conway listed Oak Bay as only one of nine of what he called "the most unwilling districts". Many were major industrial centres such as Trail, Powell River, Ocean Falls, Woodfibre and Port Alice, that faced significant assessment increases as a result of the new definition of improvements and union with poorer districts. Conway was adamant these communities should not be allowed to opt out. The loss of taxable assessments to the new districts was financially more serious than the loss of the government grant, and established a precedent for other cities and towns that wished to escape consolidation.²⁵

²¹ Harold Moffat interview, August 1992.

²² Letter from Municipality of Coldstream to Premier Hart, April 1946, Premiers Papers, BCARS.

²³ Letter from W. A. C. Bennett to Premier Hart, April 1946, Premiers Papers, BCARS.

²⁴ Letter from J.H.R. Mitchell, Secretary of the Pouce Coupe Chamber of Commerce to Premier Hart, April 1946, Premiers Papers, BCARS.

²⁵ Memorandum from C.B. Conway to F.T. Fairey, 30 March 1946, BCARS.

The extent to which the department would tolerate opposition to reform was made very clear by Cameron. In a speech to the B.C.S.T.A. Annual Convention in 1945, Cameron acknowledged there was some opposition to the larger administrative units based on financial grounds. In reply he stated,

It is not the right of any school district to say whether or not they will join in a larger district. It is the duty of the province to see that the districts are adequate for their purpose.²⁶

The local boards had now lost all right to opposition; they only had the right to cooperate. This position was also evoked by Fairey in May 1946 at a convention of provincial assessors to outline the aims of the education department and the role of the assessors in financing the system. Fairey pointed out,

British Columbia had outgrown the old administrative system for education and the department had concluded that progress educationally could not be made without a new administrative system. Under the new system an effort would be made to try to teach the citizenry to recognize their local responsibilities. ... So long as the people want education, their interest is sustained if their pocket books are touched.²⁷

Fairey fully expected the Bill to have passed by March 1946, in time for the second Inspectors' conference. The Victoria Times reported that the Inspectors, while awaiting second reading, studied the recommendations, familiarized themselves with the new school districts and discussed amendments.²⁸ All that is known of Fairey's personality and background would indicate the Inspectors, as the cadres of the department, received a departmental briefing of how the recommendations would be carried out and how to handle any opposition. The monthly inspectoral reports at the local level supports this scenario. Levirs and Stibbs spent most of the end of March explaining to individual boards in the Central Interior the ramifications of the proposed act.²⁹

²⁶ Speech by Maxwell Cameron to the British Columbia School Trustees Association, Annual Report, December 1945.

²⁷ Victoria Times, 8 May 1946, 13.

²⁸ Victoria Times, 26 March 1946.

²⁹ Inspector's Monthly Reports for F.P. Levirs and L.B. Stibbs, BCARS.

On 12 April 1946 the revised Public Schools Act, with one hundred and twenty-two amendments received royal assent. Immediately telegrams were sent to the inspectors to proceed with reorganization. In the Central Interior Levirs and Stibbs immediately began their rounds. On 11 April 1946 both were in Vanderhoof discussing the Cameron Commission with the trustees. From there they went on their separate ways. Stibbs was in Prince George on April 13 to discuss reorganization with the chairman of the Prince George City Board, Harold Moffat; and on April 23, 27, and 29 he met with the new boards for Districts 57, 28 and 58 respectively. Levirs appointed and held meetings with the new school boards for Vanderhoof on April 23, Burns Lake on April 25, Smithers on April 27 and Terrace on April 30.³⁰

There was no public outcry remembered by those interviewed or found in the Prince George press when the interim board was established and the local school boards disbanded in April. The provincial reasons for the lack of opposition probably apply to the Prince George scenario. The groundwork of Inspectors Levirs and Stibbs explaining the Cameron Report and touting its benefit, fulfilled the local people's desires for reconstruction generally and aspirations of a secondary education for their children specifically. By April the provincial election was six months past and no opposition had surfaced then; the implementation of the report was a fait accompli.

In Prince George, the members appointed by the inspectors played a significant role in the acceptance of consolidation. The interim board appointed to operate School District #57 were town boosters and the old Prince George school board. Besides Harold Moffat, the chairman of the interim board, the other members were all entrepreneurs with considerable civic and economic stature in the region; Gordon Styles, Moffat's brother-in-law owned the Home Oil distributorship, Jack Nicholson was the manager of the Overwaitea grocery store and mayor of Prince George, William Rees owned

³⁰ Ibid.

Prince George Printers and Lars Strom owned Strom Lumber.³¹ This booster spirit was affirmed in the first election after consolidation in 1948. Elections were by attendance area within the district; four members from the city, three from the rural areas. Gordon Styles, William Rees and Harold Moffat were returned; Jack Nicholson did not run.

Since the election of representatives to the school board was limited to attendance areas it would be difficult to confirm if the boosterism spirit pervaded the district. There is some evidence there may have been an amalgamation of boosterism and Stortz's concept of limited social hierarchies in small communities. H.R. Pennington, the former principal of the Prince George Junior Senior High School, was elected to represent the Willow River attendance area. Perhaps the road to office was no longer length of residence or amount of land, but had changed to Cameron's concept of acceptable trustee.

A third conference of inspectors was organized for July 1946. During the conference Cameron addressed the inspectors and outlined in his speech the philosophy of secondary education; the heart of equality of opportunity. Panel discussions included the role of school boards and the untangibles of supervision, educational administration, public relations programs, planning and construction of new schools and procedures for the election of permanent boards. A major participant in the panel discussions was W. A. Plenderleith who had carried out three regional consolidations in the province since the 1930s.

Judging from the topics, the conference was an orientation of the new role of the inspector in the new educational landscape envisaged by the department. Plenderleith's participation at the July conference of inspectors exemplified this theme. No other person in the department had more experience with the issues surrounding consolidation. The new school boards did not operate with complete autonomy but were to "avail themselves of the experience, training and knowledge of the

³¹ Moffat interview, July 1994.

local Inspectors of schools."³² Although the inspector could not vote, the boards were obliged to notify the inspector of any board meeting and if he attended and tendered his advice,

he does so not on sufferance or by courtesy, but as a right which inheres in his position and in his all-embracing duty to further the interests of the children.³³

Building costs, transportation and public relations were an integral part of this new relationship between inspectors and the boards. The inspectors had to keep a close watch on the district's demands if the department was going to substantially increase its commitment to operating building and transportation costs across the province. With a burgeoning population and virtually no school construction for the past twenty years district demands were expected to be considerable. Yet the populace had to see some material advantages from the new program if the program was going to succeed. New schools and transportation were issues that could easily divide board members, and the populace into factions as in the past. Both the inspectors and new trustees had to have the appearance of total impartiality to counter this trend.

This requirement of impartiality was confirmed by Harold Moffat. Board meetings in Prince George lasted into the early hours of the morning formulating policies regarding new schools and transportation to demonstrate equity between rural and urban areas.³⁴ Moffat remembers not necessarily a sense of dissension, but a feeling of apprehension on the part of the rural people that the city would overwhelm them. It was incumbent upon the trustees to ensure that the city bent over backwards to accommodate the rural people.³⁵ Moffat felt much of the apprehension was alleviated when people grew to understand that the local attendance areas still had some autonomy through local representation. The new board emphasized this point and made it clear that due to the size of the

³² Cameron, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry," 96.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Moffat interview, August 1992.

³⁵ Ibid.

district and poor transportation local representatives had to rely upon themselves. The trustees also made it a policy to have their board meetings at different schools throughout the year to meet with the community.

Why was the Cameron Report successfully implemented in the Prince George region? Certainly the financial gains the school district received is part of the answer. The government's contributions increased from 30 to 50 percent. The standardized mill rate across all private property with a broader definition of improvements also increased the local funds available to education, but was not instituted until 1948. In the interim the local assessments from the city and the increased contribution of the provincial government carried the district financially.³⁶ It is also partially correct the Cameron Report was successful because it reaffirmed and reasserted local control. The old districts and trustees were gone, but the local residents were able to funnel the sense of local control through representation in their local attendance areas; a significant improvement for the 40 percent of schools under the aegis of official trusteeships in the Prince George region.

The critical reason for the report's success in the Prince George region were the trustees of the new board. Cameron hoped that trustees fitted with positions of prestige and power, chosen from a wider population base, and naturally competitive would constantly raise the base line of the educational program. The position was suited to the town boosters of Prince George. Their past experience as boosters trained them to be aggressive, dynamic and innovative. The Cameron Report added an educational infrastructure to make the city an educational centre fortifying the city's economic and political central place.

The dynamism that Cameron expected from the new trustees was evident in School District No. 57. A frenzy of building activity and planning of bus routes took place that also helped to alleviate rural apprehensions. To accommodate the building needs, the district was in a fortunate

³⁶ Moffat interview, July 1994.

situation. The army base at Prince George, built to house five thousand soldiers, was being dismantled and auctioned off by the federal government. Rather than build new school houses or repair many of the old buildings, the district purchased a number of the barracks and skidded them by tractor to new locations. Two army barracks were converted into a school and a teacherage within a day or two. The barracks were ideally suited for other projects as well: eight were used to replace the aging elementary school and others became the district's maintenance workshop.³⁷

The barracks' greatest impact was the construction of the district's dormitories for rural secondary students. Originally planned in conjunction with the new high school the idea for their construction originated with Stafford, the inspector prior to consolidation. He had conducted a needs assessment of the rural areas to determine their usefulness, but neither he nor the old municipal district could convince the department of their need. Even after consolidation, the Deputy Minister had rebuked the idea in the belief that, if he consented to Prince George's request, the department would have to build one for every district.³⁸ The trustees went ahead in spite of the department's rejection, purchased the barracks and constructed the dormitory. The board told the department later using the argument that materials were on the auction block, they could be purchased for practically nothing and there was no time to negotiate.³⁹

The dormitory satisfied a great need and was a significant achievement for the new district and the trustees. Not only did the dormitory make the possibility of secondary education a reality for a far greater number of rural students, it also alleviated much of the apprehension of rural residents. The dormitory created in the minds of rural residents the impression Prince George was the educational and administrative centre of the region.

³⁷ Ibid., August 1992.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

The new trustees also attacked the problem of chronic teacher shortages and retention with the same vigour. As a delegate representing the Central Interior districts at a meeting of trustees in Edmonton, Moffat discovered that the northern Alberta districts were hiring teachers from England. These districts paid the fares for British teachers to come to Alberta on the condition that they would stay for a specific number of years. When Moffat returned he convinced the surrounding districts to advertise in English newspapers. Moffat and School District No. 57 received the applications and sent the names and qualifications to the participating districts. Many teachers were hired through this system. Usually single teachers or those with small families were hired because, as Moffat noted, "we had too many children already."⁴⁰ To house the new teachers in Prince George, the district bought the nurses' dormitory at the old hospital. Moffat pointed out that such a scheme would only be possible if the local district was in control.⁴¹

The initiatives that the trustees of the new district undertook after consolidation are also indicative of the changing relationship between the school boards, the inspectors and the Department of Education. With consolidation the role of the department and its inspectors changed.

Thomas Fleming contends the inspector's conferences outlined this new relationship. In addition to their supervisory roles, inspectors would be obliged to undertake the development of transportation systems, assist the boards in interpreting and applying provincial policies and advise the boards as to how districts should be organized and administered.⁴² As Cameron foresaw this could not have been accomplished without dramatic changes to the powers of school boards. With increased prestige and power the boards acted as buffers between the local residents and the department. The inspector then became an advisor or, if need be, a protector of the educational rights of children. In this

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Fleming, "Our Boys in the Field," 295.

arrangement the relationship between the inspector and trustees was much more harmonious.

Inspectors no longer sat in judgment of the trustees, but as educational statesmen aligned with the trustees.⁴³ This shift in responsibilities was also confirmed by Moffat. Both Levirs and Stibbs thoroughly enjoyed sitting back and saying that it was Moffat's problem.⁴⁴

The other change in relationship was between the School Board and the Department of Education. Moffat summed up the relationship as constant consultation, but the Board often did what was necessary for the betterment of the district without departmental permission. The Department often chose to disregard obvious incursions into departmental authority. Both Moffat and Roy Williston, then the principal of the new high school, gave poignant examples of this. The dormitories were built without departmental approval. Teacherages were included in the cost of the construction of portable classrooms without any authorization from the department.⁴⁵ The board hired senior matriculation students to fill vacant positions in rural schools and initiated teacher aides specifically to help these inexperienced people cope with their new situation. The district's ledgers were often juggled to at least temporarily bury unauthorized expenditures such as the teacherages.⁴⁶ Williston gave an account of a visit by Fairey to Prince George to meet with the new board and tour the new high school. He was especially interested in the shooting range built in the basement of the high school for cadet training. However, he did not expect to see the basement piled with toilets, sinks and other paraphernalia purchased from the government auction of the army base. Fairey, Williston recounted, toured the building without so much as a glance to either side or question of clarification regarding the strange collection.⁴⁷ Moffat summed up the department's seeming lack of concern by pointing out that they

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Moffat interview, August 1992.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ray Williston of Gibsons, BC, interviewed by author, August 1991 at Gibsons, BC.

couldn't say anything. "It wasn't costing much and if the Board wasn't squandering [the money] they wouldn't say anything."⁴⁸ With the board fulfilling its role by solving the local problems of rural education with financial prudence, the department was able to disengage itself from the petty problems of local management.

Conversely, there were some boundaries that could not be crossed. For example, the Central Interior district's practice of hiring teachers from England came under scrutiny. Apparently so many teachers were leaving England after the war that English authorities felt compelled to write Victoria to complain. Moffat inevitably received a letter from Victoria asking that the boards stop the practice.⁴⁹ Similarly, Victoria became concerned about the position of their inspectors. Soon after consolidation the school board realized someone was needed to act for the trustees in the daily operation of the district. The position was particularly important to the rural schools where support was necessary for matriculation students who had been hired to relieve teacher shortages. Ray Williston was offered the position of Superintendent of Schools by the trustees because the inspectors had no time for instructional support. The department told Williston to turn down the position, fearing it would trespass on the inspectors' duties.⁵⁰ The Board, instead, changed the position's title to Supervising Principal, but, as Moffat noted, maintained the original role the position was intended to fill.

The implementation of the Cameron Report was more than a simple reorganization of the educational system. Various strands of the progressive movement had addressed these changes since the beginning of the century but were not able to effect change until the Depression and World War II staggered the confidence of the nation. The Depression openly questioned past premises of society; the

⁴⁸ Moffat interview, August 1992

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

war opened the gates to change. The war introduced to the province, a government with a broader mandate and a larger bureaucracy of specialists that drove the process of implementation to organize society for specific goals. Opposition to these goals was buried by the patriotic zeal of the era that labeled opponents as outcasts of society.

The policies of the Cameron Report were successful because they met the goals of the town boosters in the district. The department obtained a standardized extended and efficient tax base to finance education. Although the provincial contributions to education would rise from 30 to 50 percent of total expenses, the prudent management by the local boards placed a cap on future expenditures. Local management by more powerful boards also released the department and its cadre of inspectors to enter into the new roles they envisioned for themselves. Released from local politics and acrimony with the public the department and inspectors could now take up the roles of educational statesmen.

The benefits the local populace received were far more practical. Local autonomy, although restructured, was maintained and for some restored. The new boards with sufficient power initiative and financial resources were able to amend those problems that had plagued schooling for decades. This was no small matter for particularly the rural schools that had seen no material progress for at least twenty years. The Cameron Report, for Prince George specifically, played to the aspirations of the town boosters. It added an educational infrastructure that augmented the city's claim as a regional centre. Public wealth and private fortunes were further insulated from economic calamity.

Ten Years After 1955-1956

This thesis has brought to light those social, political and economic factors present in the Prince George region that led to the Cameron Report's ready acceptance. The recommendations of the Cameron Report melded easily with the local booster spirit to build a regional educational infrastructure. The inadequacies of the rural schools and the innovative and aggressive approach of the

new district trustees created a climate of acceptance for the Cameron Report amongst the rural people of the region. Is there evidence that Cameron judged the problems correctly and his triad of recommendations - consolidation, local autonomy and a new method of financing - released the energies of the new boards to attack the local problems that plagued the schools of the Central Interior. In essence, were the new boards successful?

Cameron's perception of the corrections necessary was accurate in the Prince George district. The new powerful financially sound local board did adjust to local needs and problems. The most significant problem for the Prince George district was accommodating the rapidly rising school population. The student population increased from 1,177 students in 1945 to 3,385 in 1958, a 180 percent increase.⁵¹ In reminiscences of that period on the school board Moffat noted the town's birth rate averaged a classroom a month during the late 1940s, rising to a class-and-a-half by the early 1950s. Classrooms in the district rose from 44 in 1945 to 118 in 1955, an increase of 169 percent.⁵² The demand was still greater than the supply. Inspector Johnson reported that high school was operating on a shift basis to accommodate all the students. He noted also the ratepayers had approved a million dollar building program in 1954, part of which was for a new high school, and another building levy would be needed in the near future.⁵³ The significant increase in high school enrollment is more evidence of the success of Cameron's recommendations. High school enrollment increased to 1,010 in 1955,⁵⁴ a 268 percent increase from 1945. Part of the attraction for the rural students was the dormitory. Johnson noted in his 1954-1955 report the dormitory contained a significant number of

⁵¹ British Columbia, Department of Education, Annual Report of the Public Schools, 1954-55, EE 92.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., EE 157.

students from out of district⁵⁵ confirming the aspirations of boosterism and the dynamism of the new board.

The majority of the money approved by the ratepayers went to the construction of new schools. From 27 schools open in 1945 the total climbed to 43 in 1955. Many of these schools were located along the new highways that had been constructed in the past years, especially the Hart Highway completed in 1952, and Highway 16 west to Prince Rupert. A number of schools had existed along Highway 97 south, but many were closed by 1945. Rather than re-open these schools as the population grew, the district built new schools like Buckhorn, Red Rock, Hixon and Strathnaver in more central locations. The schools along the east line of the CNR continued to operate without road access until the 1960s; Longworth, closed before consolidation, was re-opened.

Teachers still remained a problem for the district. Inspector F.T. Johnson noted in his report teachers with little experience or credentials still found a classroom in the Central Interior. The local board's initiatives of hiring out-of-province or country had found sufficient teachers. The numbers of teachers employed in the district had risen by 160 percent, from 50 in 1945 to 130 in 1955,⁵⁶ but Johnson noted that 50 percent of the secondary teachers had only elementary or temporary qualifications.⁵⁷ Inspector Johnson's 1955 report also indicated half of the teachers in the district had received their training outside the country or out-of-province,⁵⁸ perhaps indicating this was affecting educational standards in the district. As an educational leader, Johnson's concerns were heard and acted upon. The school board hired a teacher assistant to assist particularly rural teachers throughout the district.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., EE 92.

⁵⁷ British Columbia, Department of Education, Annual Report of Public Schools 1955-56, FF 105.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

The common perception is that the Cameron Report ended the era of the rural school. When the consolidated districts instituted busing to more modern centralized schools.⁶⁰ This was not the case in the Prince George district. The trustees of the district were against busing. Besides the costs being prohibitive, road and weather conditions made regular service impossible. The board also felt students were better served in their own community which relieved the apprehension of the rural residents regarding consolidation.⁶¹ The second reason was the forest industry continued to be dominated by small sawmills dispersed across the country.

The demand for lumber remained high throughout the 1950s and promoted expansion; the new highways in the region intensified the dispersal. Nineteen mills alone opened in the Crooked River region north of Prince George shortly after the completion of the Hart Highway in 1952.⁶²

Government forest policies, shortages of capital and innovations in transport also contributed to the proliferation of small mills. The government adopted the Sustained Yield Unit in 1945 to conserve timber. The policy restricted the allowable cut, but allowed the timber to go to the highest bidder. With no security of timber supply capital investment and consolidation of milling operations was forestalled.⁶³ The introduction of the lumber truck and arches attached to trucks or tractors only aggravated the problem by significantly lowering the transportation costs of logs and lumber for a minimal investment.⁶⁴ The net effect was to increase the small sawmills both numerically and spatially.

⁶⁰ Joan Adams and Becky Thomas, Floating Schools and Frozen Ink Wells: The One-Room Schools of British Columbia (Pender Harbour: Harbour Publishing, 1985), 9.

⁶¹ Moffat interview, July 1994.

⁶² Mullins, "Analysis of Key Factors," 481, cited from British Columbia Lumberman, XXXVII (August 1953), 30.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 482.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 486.

Countering the dispersal of schools were the economic realities the district faced trying to build, maintain and supply the school. By the mid 1950s, because of the costs of this dispersal the district changed its building and transportation policy; and decided not to build any more rural schools.⁶⁵ Instead the board built modern facilities at Bear Lake north of Prince George and St. Mary's Lake southeast of town. To reinforce the policy, the district interpreted the bus to be the school so students could be made to walk two-and-a-half miles to the bus, and not the local school. With this decision the small mills located and remained at Bear Lake.⁶⁶

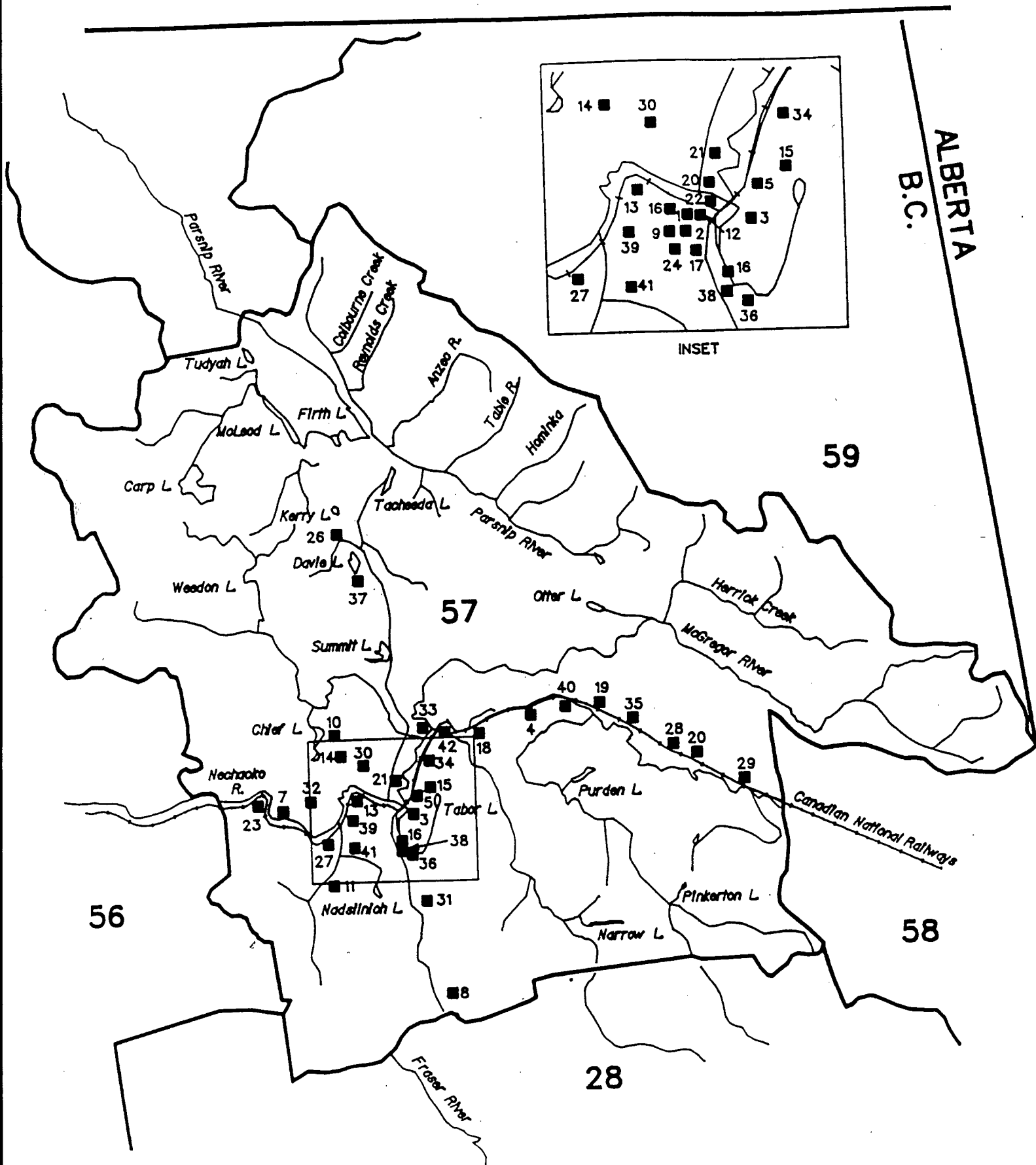
After 1956 the Sustained Yield Unit regulations were again modified to give the companies with timber licenses the final bid. Almost immediately the small sawmills began to close, the timber supply to the larger mills was assured which allowed for increased investment. Many of these rural communities and their schools disappeared as the forest industry centralized.

⁶⁵ Moffat interview, July 1994.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

SCHOOLS IN SCHOOL DISTRICT 57, 1956

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Schools in School District 57, 1956

- 1) Prince George Senior High School - inset
- 2) Prince George Junior High School - inset

Elementary Schools

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| 3) Airport - inset | 27) Mud River |
| 4) Aleza Lake - inset | 28) Newlands |
| 5) Bonnet Hill - inset | 29) Penny |
| 6) Buckhorn | 30) Pilot Mountain |
| 7) Buck Lake | 31) Red Rock |
| 8) Hixon | 32) Reid Lake |
| 9) Central South - inset | 33) Salmon Valley |
| 10) Chief Lake | 34) Shelly |
| 11) Clear Lake | 35) Sinclair Mills |
| 12) Connaught - inset | 36) Stone Creek |
| 13) Cranbrook Mills | 37) Summit Lake |
| 14) Crescent Lake | 38) Tabor Creek |
| 15) Ferndale | 39) Telachick |
| 16) Central Fort George - inset | 40) Upper Fraser |
| 17) South Fort George - inset | 41) West Lake |
| 18) Giscome | 42) Willow River |
| 19) Hansand | |
| 20) Hart Highway - inset | |
| 21) Hart Lake | |
| 22) Island Cache - inset | |
| 23) Isle Pierre - inset | |
| 24) King George V | |
| 25) Longworth | |
| 26) Kerry Lake | |

* Numbers do not correspond to previous maps.

Conclusion

Why study the implementation of the Cameron Report from the perspective of a regional case study of one of the districts established by the report? The report, much less the methods used to implement it or the effects the Cameron Report had on the areas it was supposed to help have not been researched and remain largely unexplained. The contemporary work that exists, as for instance the works of D. J. S. Smith and F.T. Fairey give only the barest of overviews as to why the report was conceived and are more explanations of the benefits to education in BC; another example of continuous progress. Those contemporaries that did comment on the report explained the Cameron Report as the inevitable outcome of educational problems, particularly in the rural areas of the province, that had plagued educational advancement for years with little evidence to support this criteria. The claims of Cameron's contemporaries became part of the historiography of British Columbia's education system in F. Henry Johnson's monograph, A History of Public Education in British Columbia. The Cameron Report was an urban based solution applied to the rural areas of the province with little or no participation from the local residents.

This research strongly indicates that the local residents were active participants and ultimately determined the success of local consolidation. This is the reason for studying the Cameron Report from a regional perspective. A regional case study dispels the perception the local people were passive participants in the process of school consolidation. As Chad Gaffield has effectively argued, case studies of policy formulation and implementation expose the complexities of competing goals and values and emphasize the role of all those who were involved.¹ The actions of the local people can narrow the field of inquiry. The Cameron Report, like all other reports contained a great many recommendations. The actions of the local residents acts as a filter straining out what was really vital

¹ Chad M. Gaffield, "Going Back to School: Towards A Fresh Agenda For The History of Education," Acadiensis 15,2 (Spring 1986): 182

to their interests. Any deviation or modification of the policies can only widen our insights into what the policy-makers believed to be true and what the local residents truly valued.²

The central question this work has dealt with was why the Cameron Report was accepted and implemented with seemingly little resistance in the Prince George region. The answer is wrapped in the social, political and economic realities of the region. The railway opened the region to settlement; the reason for the creation of these communities inevitably wrote their future. The city of Prince George was established by speculators and promoters. Their initial energies drew settlers and capital to the town and established a pattern of activity that would determine the city's future. The city entrepreneurs were forced to bind together to protect both public and private investments after the initial railway boom. Married to promotion, aggressive and visionary they united under the umbrella of boosterism to develop the city's infrastructure to lend a sense of maturity, look of prosperity and the feeling of growth. Their civic leadership worked much like a corporate board to ensure civic institutions were as modern and up-to-date as possible. The rural communities were established to tap the forest resources of the region. As frontier resource based communities their societies and institutions were shaped by the problems of resource extraction and markets. Tied to the insecurities of the prairie farmer, the sawmills remained undercapitalized and spatially disbursed. The communities attached to the sawmills remained economically weak and on the edge of extinction throughout the period under study.

The institutions, especially schools, followed the same pattern of development as their respective communities. Incorporation gave the city schools an immediate advantage. Blessed with the ability to borrow, the city boosters ensured the city schools were as modern and up-to-date as possible. They were a visible edifice of prosperity, progress and continued growth. The high school was a crowning achievement. It created the impression of Prince George as regional educational centre in the

² Ibid.

midst of a region of one-room schools and strengthened the concept of Prince George as a central place. Rural schools on the other hand were not so fortunate. From their inception they were plagued with the problems of rural education in BC: poor educational standards the result of inexperienced teachers with low qualifications and teacher transiency, inadequate funding and community dissention that school issues could cause in small communities with limited-social hierarchies. Teacher transiency and teachers with little or no experience or training were common in rural schools in the Prince George region throughout the 1940s, and the inspectors continued to blame the teachers for the poor educational standards they found. The evidence from the Prince George region confirms Paul Stortz's research of schools west of Prince George during the 1920s and 1930s. The inspectors misinterpreted the essential problems of rural education and the Department of Education misread the information it was getting from the field. The critical issues determining the quality of education lay in the communities. Economic solvency of families and the community, social hierarchies and community dedication to education played a far greater role than the qualifications and experience of the teacher. The higher wages and better living conditions for teachers the inspectors continually asked the rural school districts to provide would have made very little difference to the problems of educational quality, teacher qualifications and transiency.

The evidence from the Prince George region also confirms Paul Stortz's findings that the use of Official Trusteeships became more common during the 1920s and 1930s by inspectors to try and improve the educational efficiency of rural schools. Coincidentally this was when the number of schools rapidly increased in the Prince George region. By the 1940s the Department of Education was claiming the number of Official Trusteeships was an indication of administrative breakdown. Administrative breakdown did occur, but not as Cameron suggested because local residents had abrogated their responsibilities. Again the evidence suggests Stortz's research was correct. Limited social hierarchies in the communities projected people into positions of authority for extended lengths

of time. Faced with a continual barrage of community dissension and problems the school created such as mill rates, boarding the teacher, firewood maintenance and janitorial contracts, many trustees such as those in the Thompson District "gave up" rather than face more communal belittlement..

The Cameron Report was inevitable. The political winds of the province fanned by the population's sense of reconstruction after the war created a window of opportunity for educational change in the province. Maxwell Cameron was a "safe bet" for Premier Hart's Liberal Conservative coalition government. At least the educational progressives in the department must have known approximately what he would recommend.

The districts were consolidated into economic entities with common and broader financial resources to spread the wealth of property and improvements more evenly throughout the region. Local autonomy allowed for more powerful boards with trustees chosen outside the limited social hierarchies of the small communities to attack their common problems with a common focus. The districts were given the financial resources, under a new grant system, to deal with their local problems. Something near equality of opportunity would be ensured through local autonomy as the districts competed amongst themselves to attain complete and quality educational programs. Equality of burden and financial prudence were ensured locally and provincially through consolidation and the grant system.

The educational bureaucracy in the Department of Education was the driving force behind the implementation of the Cameron Report melded exactly with the desires of the civic boosters in the city. The Cameron Report added to the stature of the city as a central place by extending its educational infrastructure throughout the region. The city high school became a truly regional educational edifice and the city an educational centre adding to the city's image of prosperity and growth. In the rural areas of the region the report melded with the people's desire for reconstruction and the opportunity for their children to receive a secondary education.

The Cameron Report was successfully implemented with little opposition also because of

the dynamism of the local trustees appointed by the inspector. Trained in the methods of boosterism, innovative, imaginative, they immediately applied their energies to the educational problems of the region that demonstrated material progress. New schools were built, teachers hired and a bureaucratic structure built by imaginative means that did not always conform to the education department's regulations to solve local educational problems.

From this study future research could go in a number of directions. One of these that would prove invaluable to a fuller understanding of educational history in B.C. would be more research into Maxwell Cameron. Little is known of this man that dramatically altered the structure of education in BC. As a teacher, administrator and academic, how did his experiences influence his writing and inevitably education across the province. From research for this thesis there is some indication he was connected academically to a much broader progressive movement that spanned the country and inaugurated new social legislation that appeared at the end of World War II.³ Research has shown the progressive movement made significant changes to the education system in B.C. during the 1920s and 1930s. What changes occurred in the 1940s and what shape did it take?

Another direction to be explored is the function of the other school districts, particularly along the CNR line to Prince Rupert. Did boosterism follow the line of steel to the ocean and if it did, what effect did it have in the eventual function of other districts as for instance, Prince Rupert or Smithers. This research has uncovered tantalizing contemporary evidence this may have been the case.⁴ The other possibility to confirm or reject English's theory that Cameron built the districts around the existing high schools in 1945, in which case Cameron's recommendation the districts should

³ A great deal of research has been conducted on men like George Weir and H. B. King linking the wider progressive movement to their activities in BC, little research has been conducted linking Doug Owram's progressive intellectuals at the federal level to people and initiatives at the provincial level.

⁴ In a letter to the BC Teacher Vernon Crockett, President of the Skeena Omineca Teachers Association commented, "The main reason why we are isolated is that we are bounded on the west by Prince Rupert and on the east by Prince George, each of which wishes to absorb an area many times larger than its own," BC Teacher Vol. XXIV, No. 1 (September, October) 1944, 153.

be economic entities recognizable to the people may have been a secondary consideration.

A third possibility to future research is the study of the rural schools in Prince George region. No studies have been conducted of any of the rural schools in the region, many of which disappeared with the consolidation of the forest industry. This type of study would be invaluable in the search for provincial patterns for school organization and the influence of the local economy on the school and understanding the social milieu surrounding rural schools. Some of the rural schools, like Cranbrook Mills, the inspectors continually praised, while others they continually complained. Were their different social hierarchies or different types of support to the individual schools to account for the different inspectorial reports? Research in this area opens a new field of inquiry to the educational historian. The researcher must now be cognizant of other disciplines such as economics, sociology and rural and urban history.

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