

Home Economics Education in British Columbia 1903-1939:

Proving Its Worth

by

Mary Leah DeZwart

B. Sc. (Household Economics), University of Alberta, 1968

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Department of Math- Science Education

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on public school home economics education in British Columbia between 1903-1939. The aim was to examine how home economics educators of this time period worked to have home economics recognized as a compulsory school subject, and how their accomplishments were influenced by contemporary events and progressive education ideals. Documents were analyzed, compared and synthesized to form as accurate a picture as possible of the conditions under which the place of home economics in the school system was justified. Sources used included annual reports of the public schools, curriculum documents, newspapers and special interest publications, and relevant writings of the principal actors.

The time period 1903-1939 was divided into three sections. In the formative years (1903-1924) home economics was directed towards girls' vocational training as homemakers. Early home economics educators viewed the subject as a means of teaching about the middle-class "home ideal" through the inculcation of good habits of cleanliness, exactness and order. A problem arose because home economics, like other forms of practical education, was marginal, not central to the school system. It was not viewed seriously or made a priority except as it related to girls' education. Advocates of home economics decided that home economics would gain legitimacy if it were more regulated and accepted for matriculation credit, and worked toward this end.

The 1924-25 survey of the British Columbia school system by J.H. Putman and G. M. Weir and the resulting Putman-Weir Report (1925) cemented many progressive education ideas. The Report placed home economics in an ambivalent position by promoting it as a means of teaching both cultural and vocational values and criticizing it for lack of organization and poorly trained teachers. The Putman-Weir Report reaffirmed contemporary ideas about the role of home economics in socializing female students and building a healthy nation. Political and economic factors kept the implementation of the Report on hold for eight years, with the exception of the appointment of Jessie McLenaghan as first Provincial Director of Home Economics for the Department of Education in 1926.

Jessie McLenaghan set about proving the worth of home economics and ensuring its place in the public school system. The student population of home economics changed from elementary to secondary school students accompanied by increased formalization such as examinations and use of a textbook. Home economics at the secondary school level required teachers with university degrees but there was no Chair of Home Economics at the University of British Columbia to train them. Consequently there were many unqualified teachers. A prescriptive curriculum and teacher inspections were seen as necessary to counteract this. The

end result was an overemphasis on standards and technical instruction under the guise of promoting worthy home membership.

After the curriculum revision of 1936, home economics was in the ambivalent state of a practical subject in an academic setting, forced to conform to 40-50 minute periods and examinations. It was female-dominated in an education system oriented to male values and a field which contained technical knowledge as well as moral and ethical standards. Jessie McLenaghan's actions of unifying and reconciling the home economics curriculum had ensured its survival, but in a truncated form. Home economics did not last as a compulsory subject past the Chant Commission of 1960 when many New Education ideas were discarded. Conformity was emphasized over the recognition of individual differences in homes and families, and the practical importance of home economics was submerged.

In summary, a challenge is presented for home economics to re-examine and reclaim its practical roots. Suggestions for further study are made.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

A historical analysis of home economics education begins with my own relationship to home economics. In my years of classroom teaching, I perceived home economics as a low-status academic subject and a high-status practical subject. Students and parents valued the subject as one in which self-esteem and personal competence visibly increased. On the other hand, it was dispensable; students were often withdrawn from home economics classes by counsellors or administrators so that they could concentrate on more "necessary" subjects. These concerns have been transferred to a broader sphere by Peterat (1989) who describes home economics as "marginal, not mainstream" and proclaims it as a "basic challenge to pedagogical practices and forms of knowledge in schools" (p. 73). Historical inquiry into the means by which home economics became part of the British Columbia school system promised insight into its present ambivalent position.

Purpose of Study

The study focused on public school home economics education in British Columbia between 1903 and 1939. Its purpose was to examine how early educators worked to justify the place of home economics in public schools, and how their accomplishments were influenced by contemporary events and progressive education ideals. Ambivalency refers to the co-existence of opposing ideas within home economics; low-

status versus high-status and academic/cultural versus practical/vocational.

The years between 1903 and 1939 were chosen because they encompassed the following educational events: the appointment of the first qualified home economics teacher (1903); the Putman-Weir School Survey and Report (1925) which recognized home economics as a worthwhile school subject; the appointment of Jessie McLenaghan as first Director of Home Economics for the British Columbia Department of Education (1926); the elevation of home economics to matriculation and compulsory status in stages from 1928-1936; and the 1936 curriculum revision which implemented many of the recommendations of the Putman-Weir Report (1925). 1939 was selected as the end date because Jessie McLenaghan had an assistant after that date. The Second World War detracted from any significant school accomplishments until McLenaghan's retirement in 1946.

Procedure

Historical inquiry was used to conduct the study. I analyzed primary documents with relevance to home economics including British Columbia curriculum documents, newspaper accounts, annual reports of public schools, unpublished correspondence and archival material at Special Collections Division, University of British Columbia Library, the City of Vancouver Archives, the Public Archives of British Columbia and the Macdonald Institute Papers at the

University of Guelph. In addition three interviews were conducted with persons who knew Jessie McLenaghan in professional and private roles. Secondary sources were consulted for general home economics history and progressive education history.

Documents were chosen for analysis to give as broad a picture as possible; subsequently they were critiqued and cross-referenced for authenticity and reliability of information. Each particular source has its own strength. Articles written for the public, such as newspaper articles and annual reports, have more "contemporary impact" (Tosh, 1984, p. 34) but they also contain only what was considered fit for public consumption. Therefore several different sources were used. For example, in this study I balanced Annual Reports of the Public Schools in British Columbia with newspaper articles and special interest accounts such as the B.C. Teacher and Western Women's Weekly in order to amass as much information as possible. By using various sources and comparing one against the other "there is at least a chance that [the end result] will reveal the true facts - or something very close to them" (Tosh, 1984, p. 58).

The base of historical inquiry used in this study is an apprenticeship model, or in other words, one learns how to do historical inquiry by doing it. "History", according to Tosh, "is collective memory, the storehouse of experience through which people develop a sense of their social

identity and their future prospects" (Tosh, 1984, p. 1). His concept of historical inquiry is that historical knowledge has to be produced.

With the foregoing in mind, my second step was to explore and interpret the meaning of each document or composite of documents. Flexibility of focus is essential, but as Blumer (1978) points out, this does not mean that the inquiry has no direction: "It means that the focus is initially broad but becomes progressively sharpened as the inquiry proceeds" (p. 39). Research for this study began with the introduction of practical education (and thereby home economics) into the schools as a means of integrating mental, moral and physical aspects of learning. It narrowed to the exploration of home economics situated in its developing history and traditions.

"Presentism" in historical inquiry is a genuine concern which overrides other facets of validity and reliability. It is generically defined as the interpretation of past events in the light of present-day knowledge. Hodysh (1987) maintains that presentism is a necessary condition of historical research, and any attempt to eliminate it "denies the interdependence of the past and the present" (p. 141). Tosh explains the situation eloquently:

We can never recapture the authentic flavour of a historical moment as it was experienced by people of the time because we, unlike them, know what happened next, and the significance which we accord to a

particular incident is inescapably conditioned by that knowledge. (Tosh, 1984, p. 58)

In this light the hindsight of historical inquiry is an advantage because it offers the means by which the past can be interpreted through our own position vis-a-vis the subject of our inquiry.

A problematic area in historical research is clarification of the researcher's perspective. My perspective in this study includes a view of education as a system, and home economics as a political subject within that system answerable to community values. By "system", I mean a series of interlocking parts, in which movement in one area affects all other areas. By "political", I mean "the subject of how communities live [and] what they should value" (Wills, 1990). Home economics, as the study of homes and families, reflects community values at their most basic level.

Cornbleth (1988) plots the historical development of formal, mass education in three steps: expansion and extension to serve more people for longer periods of time, followed by more specialized and differentiated educational provisions, and accompanied by increasing complexity and bureaucratization. The linear sequence of the above steps may seem to contradict the idea of a system until we acknowledge, as Cornbleth and others (most notably John Goodlad) have, the "conservatism" of the school system which makes self-perpetuation an outstanding feature. A major

characteristic of self-perpetuation is the reluctance to change because both participants and beneficiaries have a stake in the maintenance and possible expansion of the status quo. Home economics became part of the education "system" between 1903 and 1939. Marjorie Brown claims that in addition it became "frozen into patterns of thought and action that prevailed at the beginning of the twentieth century" (1984, p. 51). In a similar vein, Peterat (1983) notes that although home economics was founded in a time of great ideals for women, it "ultimately served a conservative purpose in the schools, affirming the status quo for women" (p. 69). If the ultimate goal is renegotiation of the position of home economics in the education system, then we require knowledge of how the position was formed in that system. Goodson contributes the following thought: "If curriculum theorists substantially ignore the history and social construction of curriculum, mystification and reproduction of 'traditional' form and content become easier" (1990, p. 310). Historical inquiry offers therefore both the opportunity to explore the past and analyze present concerns.

Peterat (1983) extracts three recurring themes that dominate the lives of home economics educators; to be in education, to be female, and to be in home economics. She claims that these three themes "pose questions and contradictions that challenge [home economics educators] personally and professionally" (p. 67). Home economics is a

female-dominated field in a system oriented to male values, norms and assumptions. It contains technical knowledge and values as well as moral and ethical values, such as teaching for "right living". Finally, home economics is a field which attempts to achieve value and credibility as a legitimate academic subject while retaining an essential difference in its practical focus. These three themes frame this study.

Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the following distinctions are made concerning commonly used terms in home economics education history.

1. **Manual training** - was the term used to describe education meant to integrate intellectual, moral and physical learning. The use of the term began with the writings of Pestalozzi.¹ It was appropriated by the Macdonald-Robertson Movement which funded the establishment of manual training centres across Canada. In British Columbia, manual training initially referred to boys' industrial training and girls' domestic science classes. The Supervisor of Manual Training for the British Columbia Department of Education was nominally in charge of both boys' and girls' work until a Home Economics Director was appointed in 1926.

2. **Domestic Science and Home Economics** are used interchangeably in this study. Adelaide Hoodless, pioneer

worker in the home economics movement argued for domestic science in Canadian schools on the grounds that it would contribute to "right living" and stronger, healthier families in addition to occupying the girls while the boys received manual training (1898). This somewhat narrow view of home economics was broadened by Marion Talbot.² She contended that home economics should be "awakening and cultural as well as vocational" (Talbot, 1913, p. 235). Saidak (1987) suggests that the need for home economics arose from the need to reconstruct a societal place for women whose roles had been diminished by industrialization. "Attaching 'home' to 'economics' was a purposeful synthesis meant to reclaim the place of economics within the domestic sphere and to acknowledge the interdependence of home and market economics" (Saidak, 1987, p. 127).

3. **Manual arts** - was distinguished from manual training and home economics by grade level in the 1927 and 1937 British Columbia curriculum revisions. "Manual arts" described the content taught to girls and boys in grades 1-6. Home economics was specifically directed to girls in grades 7-12 and manual training to boys in those grades.

4. **Practical arts** - was the umbrella term used for manual arts, manual training and home economics in the 1937 British Columbia curriculum revision. The term "practical arts" probably originated with the Faculty of Practical Arts at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, which

trained teachers in household arts, industrial arts, physical education and other allied subjects.

5. **New Education** - was the term in general use in Canada for the American term "progressive education". New Education had both social and educative aspects. Its educative side was characterized by emphasis on practical learning through concrete rather than abstract examples. Selleck (1968) considered practical education, technical education, industrial education, whole education, hand and eye education and manual training to be one and the same as New Education. Cremin (1961) presented a social definition of progressive education, claiming that it "began as Progressivism in education: a many-sided effort to use the schools to improve the lives of individuals" (p. viii). In the Putman-Weir Report (1925) the term "progressive education" rather than "New Education" was used. Although there are some debatable differences, the terms are used interchangeably in this study.

6. **Moral**- in the context of this study refers to "expressing or teaching a conception of right behaviour" rather than the more common definition of "considerations of right and wrong behaviour" (Webster's Third International Dictionary, 1971). Its most frequent use was in reference to the proper household which would teach the prevailing middle-class standards of right living. Considerations of right and wrong behaviour is the more common home economics definition of "moral" in use today. It implies the use of

moral reasoning to reach an ethically-sound decision which best fulfils one's values and beliefs without infringing upon others' beliefs and values.

7. **Practical/vocational values** - are initially distinguished in the study in the following way.

"Vocational" values are those values ascribed to education which is skills-training or job-training of immediate use to the student. In British Columbia this definition lost some of its meaning when students began spending more years at school, but were still supposedly learning job-oriented skills. The word "practical" came into use to describe technical or skill-oriented aspects of education coupled with the ability to take that technical knowledge and apply it to a variety of situations. An example is the use of a recipe or instruction sheet. Technical knowledge of a recipe is of limited practical use unless one knows how to adapt that recipe to varying conditions and situations. An additional definition of vocation as a "calling" (Canadian College Dictionary, 1989, p. 521) reminds us that in the time period 1903-1939 homemaking (and by association home economics) was frequently referred to as a woman's vocation, in direct reference to her anticipated future life role.

8. **Academic/cultural values** - academic values are defined as the "worth given to scholarly study and abstract thought that is not of practical relevance" (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1990, p. 6). Cultural values are defined as "the refined understanding of human intellectual achievement

and development" (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1990, p.282). It was assumed that the academic and liberal arts subjects taught the values of the culture through the transmission of important beliefs and traditions. Thus, subjects such as Latin were academic and cultural, although not of practical relevance. The terms are potentially confusing because practical means could also be used to teach about cultural values. This was certainly the case in the introduction of home economics to teach young girls the skills necessary for preservation of Imperialist or middle-class values. After the Putman-Weir Report (1925), home economics was viewed as a practical subject which taught cultural values.

Related Research

The early histories of home economics education in British Columbia provide events and dates in uncritical fashion, describing how opposition to home economics was overcome. Lightfoot and Maynard (1971) chronologued the development of home economics education in British Columbia from 1896 to 1941 using the metaphor of "weathering the storm". In their view, hard-working home economics supporters had overcome adversity to expand the program in every direction. Lightfoot and Maynard reported that communities were much quicker to adopt manual training than home economics, attributed to "the fact that manual training was not learned at home, and home economics was supposed to be" (Lightfoot and Maynard, 1971, p. 25). Opposition to

home economics occurred at all levels: at one time the University Women's Club of Vancouver withheld membership from women who had obtained a university degree with home economics as part of their course (Lightfoot and Maynard, 1971, p. 17). Lightfoot and Maynard did not place home economics in context with other New Education subjects. Home economics was portrayed as victorious after a legitimacy battle. The relevance of home economics to the education of young girls was taken for granted.

J.F.K. English (1937) used annual public school reports for most of his historical account of the development of home economics in British Columbia. He concluded that home economics had been implemented slowly in areas outside Vancouver and Victoria because it was perceived as a step backward to a time when women's formal education "consisted of their becoming proficient in the arts and crafts of homemaking" (English, 1937, p. 2). The reformist mission of home economics permeated English's writing:

Home economics has not been accepted without a steady pressure by those engaged in spreading the gospel nor is its present position being maintained without constant vigilance on the part of the Present Director [Jessie McLenaghan] who exerts a personal interest in each of the 78 centres" (English, 1937, p. 21).

Jessie McLenaghan promoted a similar theme of "proving its worth" in her own brief history of home economics in British Columbia from 1926-1939. Further discussion of

McLenaghan's work takes place later in this study. For the moment, examples of McLenaghan's phrases such as "home economics outgrew the accusation that it was an 'unprepared' subject" (McLenaghan, 1939a) prepare us for the picture of a subject under siege.

All three early studies portray home economics education in a tenuous position but do not place it within a practical education context. Concerns about legitimacy were not related to the ambivalent state of home economics as a female-dominated subject in an education system oriented to male values, or as a practical subject in an academic setting. The compromises required for inclusion in the public school system were not acknowledged.

More critical research of home economics in British Columbia has come from the protracted examinations of home economics curriculum by Wilson (1985) and Thomas (1986). These writers both describe perceived inadequacies in home economics throughout its history. Wilson (1985) analyzed home economics curriculum documents and described the apparent dimensions of practice as customary, instrumental, interpretive, and reflective. Customary practice, according to Wilson, dominated home economics education in British Columbia from 1896 to 1926 and was characterized by the teacher as source of all information and the female student as homemaker-in-training. The refinement of skills within home economics was equated with "upholding the moral framework [of the family]" (Wilson, 1985, p. 114).

Instrumental practice took hold between 1926 and 1946, exemplified by the addition of scientific principles and control of programs via a Director of Home Economics. Offering curricular documents as evidence, Wilson argued that home economics practice did not advance beyond the instrumental stage between 1912 and the last curriculum revision in 1979.³ A critical feature of Wilson's analysis is the view of curriculum documents as indistinguishable from practice, isolated from other educational events. Wilson's categories are very large and could almost be considered orientations to curriculum development rather than evolutions in practice. The relationships between the values ascribed to particular subjects and the political and social educational status quo are undeveloped.

Thomas (1986) presented a broader perspective of home economics in her exploration of the forces influencing home economics curriculum in British Columbia between 1912-1985. Her guiding question concerned the extent to which home economics professionals influenced the curriculum change process. Thomas concluded that they had more influence as individuals or members of groups than as policy-makers. While not using the words "customary" or "instrumental", Thomas expressed concern that home economics actions were "characterized by reaction and conformity rather than influence and initiative" (Thomas, 1986, p. 3). The curricular changes elucidated by Thomas supported her idea

that home economics has been influenced by alternating cycles of progressivism and traditionalism.

Building upon Thomas' work, potential links between the justification of home economics as a subject area and the prevailing progressive or traditional educational ideology can be explored. However, to view home economics as trapped in instrumentalism, or deficient in political will, means to examine it out of context with contemporary educational concerns. Home economics education history needs to be studied as part of the broader field of education history. Continuing ^{talk, discussion} discourse is essential to confront contradictions and underlying assumptions.

Ambivalency surrounding the purpose of home economics education has been present from its earliest years. Vaines (1984) provided substantiating evidence in her content analysis of the Lake Placid conferences on home economics held around the turn of the century. Her research indicated that about two-fifths of the original discussion was skills-oriented and the remainder research, theory and philosophy-directed. Vaines concluded from her study that home economics lacks "centredness". Saidak (1987) studied home economics development in the context of the early feminist movement in Canada between 1890 - 1910 and suggested that the ambivalence of home economics was brought about by the "lack of original consensus of meaning, problems and professional boundaries" (p. iii).

British writers have drawn similar conclusions and emphasized the variable of "class" as a reason for initiating home economics in public schools. Dyhouse (1978) gives evidence of contradictory messages of high technical standards versus moral goodness in her study of a "feminine" curriculum for English schoolgirls between 1870-1963. Home economics, according to Dyhouse, originated from two middle-class beliefs: "poverty could be cured through thrift and careful housekeeping" and "women's mission was to be the moral and spiritual guardian of the home, which would be a refuge and an antidote to the lure of the street" (Dyhouse, 1978, p. 297). Domestic science education was necessary to make up for the "perceived inadequacies of working class households" who did not teach their daughters properly (Dyhouse, 1978, p. 297). Purvis' (1985) historical review of domestic subjects in Britain since 1870 reinforced the view of domestic science as a tool of educational reform. Through domestic science, the middle class could train working class girls to be more competent wives and mothers and be available for domestic service. It would also make household work more pleasant and ultimately, serve male purposes (Purvis, 1985, p. 150). Purvis and Dyhouse agreed that working class and middle class girls were taught differently - with the latter taught ornamental knowledge rather than occupational skills. An insidious moral message about the obligation of women to provide a "home sweet home" was present (Purvis, 1985, p. 150). With very strong gender

and class entrenchment, domestic subjects "have embodied stereotyped notions about women and femininity that have served...to depress [female] educational ambition [and] define such subjects as essentially feminine" (Purvis, 1985, p. 170).

Shapiro (1986) contended that home economics lost its spirit of inquiry and criticism after its general acceptance following World War One. No new leaders developed and "what kept home economics alive was not its content but its sex" (Shapiro, 1986, p. 219). Home economists substituted activity for activism, "doing" something, rather than doing something "about something". An example related by Shapiro involves the creation of a "new" yellow pudding by a corn-product experimental kitchen in the mid 1940's. The home economists who developed the pudding stressed the themes of high standards of quality, uniform results from every package, and foolproof methods of preparation at home. Shapiro notes that "unlike Mrs. Richards and Mrs. Abel [early leaders in home economics] the kitchen team had no particular vision of nutritional or moral splendor to guide them. A yellow pudding was its own reward" (Shapiro, 1986, p. 221). The example of the yellow pudding illustrates the everyday contradictions of home economics. The women who produced the product were doing their jobs and contributing their knowledge to society. The question is whether their efforts contributed to the improvement of homes and family life.

Limitations of the Study

1. Information sources form the first limitation. Primary sources were used to the extent that they were available for the British Columbia home economics content, and in some instances are incomplete or missing. Secondary sources were consulted on early home economics history in North America, the progressive education movement in the United States and Canada, and general political events. Therefore these sources are subject to the particular interpretations of their authors. Endnotes have been included to direct the reader who wishes to seek further study.

2. The scope of home economics study was limited to its development as a public school subject in British Columbia. Commercialization and the creation of the consumer role were important in the development of home economics, particularly in the Interwar period, but beyond the range of this study.

3. For the purposes of this study, I have located home economics within the context of the progressive education movement. An equally strong case could be made that it is an important part of the early feminist movement (Saidak, 1987). The view of home economics as a subset of practical education enabled me to focus on the examination of cultural and vocational values which are more apparent in education than in the feminist social reform movement of the early twentieth century. A second reason for regarding home economics as part of progressive education is to reinforce

its sense of belonging to the entire history of education, rather than solely to women's history.

4. Social class as a dimension in the dissemination of home economics education is not a central focus of this study. As part of practical arts, home economics was introduced into schooling in response to a quest for education which could be relevant to a diverse public (Peterat and DeZwart, in press). Educationists assumed the power to decide what was best for the socially less powerful, under the influence of social reformers and vested industrial interests (Tomkins, 1986). Thus from the outset home economics was classist: lower classes would be taught middle-class values and standards. Detailed discussion of the class issue is suggested for further study.

Significance of the Study

The study provides essential background which is useful and necessary for research on classroom practice. Peterat (1989) suggested that all research of the relationship between home economics and other school subjects should be grounded in historical study. Examination of the work of home economics pioneers through the ideology of the practical education movement offers better understanding of past restrictions and constraints and guidance for dealing with current challenges of home economics.

Thesis Overview

Chapter Two sets out the foundations of home economics in British Columbia, beginning with the philosophies and programs of the first qualified teachers, Winnifred McKeand and Elizabeth Berry. Through these women, connections are made to the practical education movement and early home economics institutions in Canada and the United States. The extensive growth of home economics and general education in British Columbia is outlined from 1903 to 1924, when a political combination of community forces resulted in a survey of the British Columbia school system by J.H. Putman and G.M. Weir. In Chapter Three the Putman-Weir Report (1925) is examined for what it said about practical education and home economics in particular. Chapter Four focuses on Jessie McLenaghan, first Director of Home Economics for the British Columbia Department of Education. Although detailed study ends in 1939, an epilogue has been provided to give the reader a sense of later happenings in home economics. In the concluding chapter, the compromises required for home economics to gain legitimacy in the British Columbia school system are discussed and evaluated.

Chapter One Endnotes

1. Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) was a Swiss educational reformer who was influenced by Rousseau's ideas of developmental learning and concept of natural education. Pestalozzi saw education as having three strands: intellectual ("head"), manual ("hand"), and moral ("heart"). He aimed to replace the passive forms of old education with active interest on the part of the student. Two sayings credited to Pestalozzi would not be out of place in a curriculum statement today: 1. Instruction does not consist of teaching pupils about thought but teaching them how to think, and 2. Observation is the absolute basis of all knowledge. For further reference, see:

Centenary of Pestalozzi. (1927). B.C. Teacher. (1927). 6 (8), p. 38-39.

Heafford, M. (1967). Pestalozzi. London: Methuen.

Phillips, C.E. (1957). The Development of Education in Canada. Toronto: Gage. pp. 412-414.

2. Marion Talbot was a protege of Ellen Richard, and a member of the Sanitary Science Club chaired by Mrs. Richards in 1885. Her career as the first Dean of Women at the University of Chicago extended from 1892 to 1925. The objectives of the Department of Household Administration chaired by Talbot at the University of Chicago indicated the prevailing belief in the synthesis of cultural and vocational values in home economics. Through home economics study students were to be given a general view of the place of the household in society as a means of liberal culture, and to receive training in the rational and scientific administration of the home as a social unit. For further reference, see:

Annual Reports of the University of Chicago. (1911-1912). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Norton, A.P. (1925). Marion Talbot. Journal of Home Economics, 17 (9), 479-483.

3. The home economics curriculum in British Columbia is currently in the process of revision (1991) by a committee of home economics teachers chaired by Leslie Paris, Burnaby School District. Other committee members and their school districts are Keren Farquharson, Burnaby; Sandra Hodgson, South Okanagan; Evelyn Kerr, Vancouver; Karen Larsen, Langley; Barbara Raynor, Windermere; and Gale Smith, Kamloops. Northern British Columbia and Vancouver Island are unrepresented.

CHAPTER II HOME ECONOMICS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA 1903-1924

In this chapter, the expansion and justification of home economics education is explored through examination of the various interest groups which helped introduced home economics in the schools. Home economics educators tried to tailor the program to the male-oriented education system. They were given the mandate of teaching technical skills in a moral context and they worked toward legitimacy for home economics as an academic subject without sacrificing its essential practical focus. As will become clear, the degrees of success varied.

The appointment of Winnifred McKeand as domestic science instructor for the Victoria School Board in 1903 signified successful political footwork by women's groups and growing interest in and appreciation of domestic science training for girls. In the years between 1903 and 1924, home economics in British Columbia expanded from 240 to over 11,000 pupils. Two conditions under which home economics took its place in the school system became increasingly apparent. One was that home economics should be practical, and the other that it should preserve the cultural values of the nation.

Home Economics Pioneers

Technical skills taught through home economics were immediately seen as a means of improving homes and families. The Daily Colonist hailed the presence of Winnifred McKeand

as evidence of "the important work to be undertaken [through the teaching of] theory and practice of household management on scientific lines" ("Domestic science in the school", 1903, p.8). McKeand was introduced as a graduate of the Boston School of Cookery and the Montreal School of Cookery. She had also taught in Pictou, Nova Scotia at a school funded by the Macdonald-Robertson movement (White, 1951, p. 536). The "Macdonald schools " as they came to be known were the means of introducing manual training into Canada.¹ When the funding for boys' manual training in British Columbia was due to run out in 1903, the school board officials decided to ask the provincial government to continue the program (Vancouver Board of School Trustees Minutes [VBST Minutes], 1903). The Local Councils of Women (LCW) in Vancouver and Victoria seized the opening to request domestic science.² The Victoria School Board received a deputation from the Women's Council who said they were "as anxious that the girls be taught domestic science as the boys are taught manual training" ("Trustees want", 1903, p. 2). Anticipating opposition on financial grounds, the Council of Women offered to equip the domestic science room if the board would pay half a year's salary for a teacher. Margaret Jenkins, one of the School Board Trustees, assured the deputation she was "heartily in accord with their objects". With every base covered, the School Board could only agree. The four hundred dollars required

to equip the room was raised largely through personal donations (Lightfoot & Maynard, 1971).

McKeand told the Daily Colonist that her domestic science instruction would enable students to apply theoretical knowledge of homemaking. The end result would be that "the homes of the people should be made healthy and happy by means of the simple methods which this science of domestic economy can teach every girl who is ever likely to become the manageress of a home" ("Domestic science in the school", 1903, p. 8). Domestic science instruction had two parts: "the educational side which related to the development of the mind and observation of the child, training the hand to do as the eye and mind suggest....and the practical application of all this teaching" ("Domestic science in the school", 1903, p. 8). Through continual training in order and neatness, the child would learn that "regularity ...and cleanliness are great lighteners of work and work [is] a positive pleasure".

A Daily Colonist report in February of 1904 extolled the virtues of domestic science. Even though domestic science encumbered the "already large list of extras being taught in the public schools of the city" McKeand was credited with "inculcating cleanliness, exactness and order" into the minds of the pupils. The young female pupils were to have proper middle-class habits impressed upon them through application of technical knowledge. The lesson attended by the reporter had included a full lecture on the

parts of a wheat grain, a practical test for gluten and an apparently innovative muffin-making activity. The class of 20 was divided into five sections, and "one of each section mixed the flour, one mixed the general ingredients, one beat the egg and milk and the fourth greased the pan for baking" ("Domestic Science", 1904, p. 6).

Word of the success of domestic science in Victoria soon spread to Vancouver. In April of 1904, McKeand gave a lecture on domestic science at the Pender Street Hall in Vancouver under the auspices of the Local Council of Women. W.P. Argue, the Vancouver Superintendent of Schools, school trustees, teachers and LCW members attended.

The Vancouver Daily Province reported that the lecture was made "much more interesting by practical demonstration" ("Lecture on domestic science", 1904, p. 12). A large gas cooking stove and several tables were placed on the platform and twelve young girls in caps and aprons mixed, kneaded and stirred their way through a typical second-year lesson. McKeand told the audience that "woman's noblest occupation is that of homemaker and the 'home ideal' cannot be brought before a child at too early an age" ("Lecture on Domestic Science", 1904). Domestic science was important "since it trained the mind and hand to work in conjunction and as young girls were naturally interested in home work [this training] was not difficult". After pointing out that maintaining a domestic science room was inexpensive, McKeand set her young pupils to work and judiciously produced a

batch of hot buns for the audience. The entire effort must have been convincing. A petition from the Vancouver Women's Council re domestic science was received by the Vancouver School Board six weeks later (VBST Minutes, 1904). On February 25, 1905, a motion was made that the Minister of Education be requested to include in the allowance for teachers, "special teachers such as manual training, domestic science, etc." (VBST Minutes, 1905a). Male support was offered by W.P. Argue, City Superintendent of Schools for Vancouver who explained that domestic science was being introduced in order that "the girls would receive a training similar to that of the boys" [i.e. manual training] (Annual Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia [ARPS], 1903-04, p. A55).

In July of 1905, Elizabeth Berry of Mildmay, Ontario wrote to Mary Urie Watson, her former Principal at Macdonald Institute, Guelph, Ontario, to announce that she had been appointed to the position of domestic science teacher for the Vancouver School Board (Berry, 1905a; VBST Minutes, 1905b). There had been great excitement at Guelph that spring of 1905 when the Vancouver School Board advertisement for a domestic science teacher first appeared in the Toronto papers (Lightfoot & Maynard, 1971). Elizabeth Berry competed against university graduates for the position (Berry, 1905a). Her specialist's certificate from Macdonald Institute had taken only one year instead of the usual two

because she had already been teaching school for seven years (Watson, 1904; Berry, 1905e).

A series of letters over the next few months chronicled Berry's difficulties in establishing a brand-new department. They also revealed the political stratagems that Mary Urie Watson considered essential for the establishment of home economics. Watson suggested classes of 24 pupils; there would be dropouts over the year and "it is wise for pioneers to make the money expended cover as many children as possible" (Watson, 1905a). If authorities demurred about two hour lessons, Watson counseled Berry to offer to teach sewing in addition to cookery; "[the School Board] will be charmed with the idea and you will get your way" (Watson, 1905a). Although difficulties were encountered replicating the equipment she had used at Guelph, Elizabeth Berry did not consider adapting some of those requirements to local conditions (Berry, 1905b; Berry, 1905c). She queried Watson on the source of the individual burners considered essential to the "hollow square" classroom arrangement.³ Watson replied that, having been unable to find suitable ones on the market, she had designed them herself and her brothers in Ayr, Ontario made them (Watson, 1905b). The little stoves were finally obtained but they were clearly not part of everyday domestic experience. The students could have managed with regular stoves, but this would not have provided sufficient academic status. It was more important that the science laboratory be emulated.

Through Mary Urie Watson, links can be made to several ongoing events in home economics at the turn of the century. Watson had graduated from the Philadelphia Cooking School and Teachers College, Columbia University. She had been a domestic science teacher in St. Louis, Missouri and Hamilton, Ontario ("Elected Officers", 1909). Watson was hired by Adelaide Hoodless to teach at the Ontario Normal School of Domestic Art and Science in Hamilton (Saidak, 1987, p. 59). This began a close association with Hoodless, founder of the Women's Institute and early pioneer of public school domestic science education.⁴ Home economics was a field intended for females, with Watson subscribing to Hoodless' notion that domestic science should "do for the daughters of the country what was being done for the farmers and their sons" through agricultural education (Watson, 1906, p. 90).

As the first Dean of Macdonald Institute from 1903-1920, Watson became well known nationally and in the United States, the West Indies, Great Britain and South Africa (Guild, 1926). She attended the Lake Placid Conferences and was elected third vice-president of the American Home Economics Association; she recommended that Elizabeth Berry buy the Lake Placid reports for "ammunition for argument as well as teaching" (Watson, 1905a). One of Watson's legacies to home economics education may have been her pragmatic attitude, reflected in her statement about the honesty of

the skill of sewing. "When you express yourself by making things, and not by using words, it becomes impossible to dissimulate your vagueness or ignorance by ambiguity" (Watson, cited in Ross, 1974, p. 75).

The teaching of the "gentle art of cooking" was regarded as a "new and radical departure" by the Vancouver Daily Province reporter who visited Elizabeth Berry's domestic science classroom ("Vancouver girls to learn", 1905, p. 13). The well appointed classroom was described as modern in everything with the conveniences that would be found in "every household where the matron exercises proper and efficient control". Sanitation and hygiene were foremost considerations. The tables for the hollow square arrangement were so smoothly planed that "not a sign of a crack [was] visible so that dirt cannot accumulate". Each pupil had her own little desk stove and absolute jurisdiction over one drawer. The reporter claimed that the results of domestic science teaching would be appreciated not only by the girls and their parents but in the future when "many a man will doubtless bless the Board of School Trustees for its thoughtful attention" ("Vancouver girls to learn", 1905).

Both Berry and McKeand stressed that domestic science education should include theoretical and practical learning. A.G.E. Hope of the Ontario Normal School summed up the basic method of instruction: "School girls cannot be crammed with

theory for good results. The instruction should be practical, but the reason for each process must be explained" ("A Wide-Awake Convention", 1900, p. 76). By being academically justifiable, home economics could be a legitimate practical subject. Just as John Dewey had promoted domestic experience as a particularly meaningful way to learn in his Laboratory School, ⁵ so did McKeand and Berry capitalize on the natural interest of young pupils in home work to promote homemaking as woman's place in life. They supported vocational skills training of girls in order to improve the homes of the nation.

Conversely, manual training for boys was less vocationally specific and was justified on different grounds. Harry Dunnell, Inspector of Manual Training, defined the primary ends of manual instruction as the "broader education of 'learning by doing'... 'the all-round development of a boy's faculties'...[and] 'the rounding out of a boy's education'" (ARPS, 1909-1910, p. A34). No mention was made of the possibility that women would bless the Board of School Trustees for their husbands having learned woodwork. Manual training did not have the moral requirement expected from home economics.

Promotion and Expansion of Home Economics

The participants at the first Home Economics Section of the Provincial Institute for Teachers discussed whether sewing should be a school subject ("Second Day", 1906).

Only two domestic science teachers were present (Lightfoot & Maynard, 1971), but the Local Council of Women was well represented. Several women including Winnifred McKeand spoke in favour of specialists for the subject. Sewing, the group decided, should be "part of all girls' equipment for life" and had to be taught in school because it might not be taught at home. One woman even proposed that sewing should be taught to boys as well as girls "because it came in very handy to sailors, miners and lumbermen" ("Second Day", 1906, p. 8). The discussion signalled the role of practical education as an "add-on"; a means of enhancing the cultural or aesthetic education of females, and replacing "housewifely" services for males.

Domestic science continued to expand after its initial warm reception. Within two months of her arrival, Elizabeth Berry reported to Mary Urie Watson that Superintendent Argue was talking about having more rooms equipped and a longer course (Berry, 1905d). In the first year of domestic science in Vancouver, Berry received over four hundred visitors (Lightfoot & Maynard, 1971). The Vancouver School Board had made attendance compulsory for fourth and fifth grade girls at the outset ("Vancouver girls to learn", 1905). When transporting pupils to woodwork and cookery centres became too costly, the Vancouver School Board decided to provide accommodation in all new schools for these subjects and require the instructors to move about

(ARPS, 1906-1907, p. A38). Sewing in the elementary grades was deemed worthy of a special supervisor, Alice Boorman, by the Victoria School Board in 1907 (ARPS, 1906-1907, p. A41). By 1909 Elizabeth Berry had apparently charmed the Vancouver school trustees sufficiently, to use Mary Urie Watson's phrase, to have sewing offered in the Vancouver high schools (ARPS, 1909-1910, p.A36). The movement from elementary schools to more advanced domestic science programs in high schools paralleled advanced manual training classes (ARPS, 1907-1908, p.B34).

The aim of the domestic science public school program between 1903 and 1916 was to teach practical skills in order to improve living standards; to "develop those household arts upon which depends so much the welfare, prosperity and even the happiness of the family" ("Domestic Science", 1903, p. 8). Through home economics instruction the lives of individuals in families would be improved. Conformity and orderliness took precedence over relevance to real life conditions. A pupil of sewing in 1915 recalled learning how to gather a six-yard petticoat frill by "stroking every fold of fabric with the needle" (Gibbon, 1989). A visiting reporter to a Vancouver domestic science classroom in 1912 was captivated by the uniformity of a "class in omelets".

My omelet dream came true last week when I had the pleasure of visiting [a domestic science class] and watching sixteen young girls make sixteen distinct and separate omelets....to anyone who had gone to school in

the days when the teaching of cooking and sewing and housekeeping were not thought of and when the hours were passed in a weary repetition of writing, spelling and arithmetic, "a class in omelets" is a decided interesting thing to watch.... Miss Berry tells me that classes in domestic science have worked wonders in making the pupils neat and cleanly and self-reliant.

("Casual Comment", 1912a, p. 9)

The manner in which the sixteen girls simultaneously "put the whites to test", and then returned to their desks to answer a "catechism regarding eggs" seemed wearisome enough but the goals of domestic science instruction were apparently being met. It was a legitimate subject which would motivate students and maintain their interest.

A sewing class attended a week later by the same reporter ("Casual Comment", 1912b) indicated that some students lacked certain standards and that home economics teachers had their hands full raising everyone to the desired middle-class standard. An intermediate sewing class (grades four and five) was sewing a doll's undergarments. The main difference in the garments, according to the observer, was in the colour.

All had been white to start with but some had fallen so far behind ...as to be described only as grimy...The Supervisor [said] one must keep harping on this subject of neatness....Some children are so untidy and unclean that it is an unpleasant duty to have to bend over

them, and one wonders what sort of homes and mothers they must have. Others are a delight to look at and to instruct. ("Casual Comment", 1912b, p. 9)

The reasons for the differences in the garments could have been as simple as whether a child had washed his or her hands after recess, but they became moral judgments about suitable home environments.

As home economics grew, it encountered problems of definition. Elizabeth Berry complained to Mary Urie Watson that many of her visitors considered domestic science to mean cooking "no more and no less" (Berry, 1905e). She started the process of formalizing the subject by writing an outline of her course on the blackboard. By 1912 the first curriculum document had been written (British Columbia Department of Education, 1912). A list of rules relating to domestic science centres included keeping track of attendance, visitors, equipment and expenses, having one course of work recognized for all schools in one city, and submitting course and building plans for approval to the Department of Education. This move to formalization included a clear practical prescription:

If the pupils have been taking needlework in the previous grades, see that the cap, apron, sleeves, towel and pot-holder are completed [first]....As "practical application is the only mordant which will set things in the memory" principles should be taught

in conjunction with the practice of cookery....Develop quick, free independent action in all lessons. Cooking must be active work giving the child an ability to do. Explanations should articulate the lessons as closely as possible to those done in other departments of the school. (British Columbia Department of Education, 1912, p. 38)

The appointments of domestic science supervisors in both Vancouver and Victoria indicated increase in status and numbers of pupils. Elizabeth Berry supervised the Vancouver schools and Annie Juniper "a lady of much experience and skill" was put in charge of domestic science work in Victoria in 1911 (ARPS, 1910-11, p. A43). Juniper, like Mary Urie Watson, personified the juncture of several educational events.⁶ She had worked at a Macdonald school in Nova Scotia (Beckwith, 1905) and had been Dean of the School of Domestic Science at Macdonald College (Rowles, 1964) and Supervisor at the Manitoba Agricultural College (Wilson, 1966). Annie Juniper wrote the first textbook for home economics in British Columbia, the Girls' Home Manual, in 1913. Over 3000 copies of the manual were reported to have been distributed by the Free Textbook Branch (ARPS, 1913-14, p. A74).

Compulsory attendance and examinations were initiated in addition to provision of a text. The Department of Education curriculum stated that "female candidates [for high school entrance] from schools where domestic science

instruction has been given must hold Domestic Science diplomas or fulfil Departmental requirements as to attendance and work" (British Columbia Department of Education, 1912, p. 39). Two years later the Vancouver Inspector of Schools, J.S. Gordon, reported a "wholesome influence upon the [domestic science and manual training] classes" because the year's work was being taken into account for high school entrance (ARPS, 1913-14, p. A62). Elizabeth Berry, in her 1913 report, expressed concern about the amount of time being spent on technical instruction in needlework and hoped that the teachers would gradually incorporate "the educative side ...[including] practical knowledge of textiles, good taste in clothing and other phases of the subject" (Vancouver Board of School Trustees Annual Report [VBST Annual Report], 1913, p. 63). Berry also noted plans for domestic science to appear on the monthly report card and speculated that this step would give the subject "the place in our school course it deserves". Berry's recognition of the existence of the "educative side" was evidence of the need for academic legitimation of home economics as well as practical instruction.

Manual training and home economics teachers struggled to be recognized as teachers in addition to having their subjects accepted. Harry Dunnell, the provincial Supervisor of Manual Training voiced this concern in his 1914 annual report. In a direct statement to school principals, Dunnell entreated them not to leave two members of their staff out

of teachers' meetings - the manual training and domestic science instructors. "Many of your discussions may not have any direct bearing on their work" wrote Dunnell, "but it will do neither party any harm to become interested in each other's work, as all are striving for the same end" (ARPS, 1913-14, p. A59). Even though manual training was taught by men for boys, it encountered the same academic bias about the inferiority of practical subjects that plagued home economics.

The roles of manual training and home economics were changing in the school system. Rather than being the integrating factors in a school system, they had to adapt to that system. The original proponents of practical education intended it to motivate students individually, personalize education and "send the whole child to school - head, heart and hand" (Robertson, 1907). Yet, in order to validate their subjects, the teachers were drawn to the very techniques which were the antithesis of individual integration - regulation, conformity, and proof of worth through use of formal textbooks and examinations. Home economics and manual training had to be recognized as legitimate academic subjects without losing their essential practical focus.

Home economics in British Columbia received a boost with the unexpected residency of Alice Ravenhill in 1911.⁷ Her presence and credentials measurably increased the status

of home economics in the province (Tomkins, 1986).

Ravenhill became rapidly involved in the Local Council of Women (Vancouver Local Council of Women Minutes [Vancouver LCW Minutes], 1911a, 1911b, 1911c, 1911d) where she was made an honorary member almost on arrival. The Vancouver School Board hired Alice Ravenhill to present five lectures in 1912 to the domestic science teachers for the rather large sum of one hundred dollars - almost a month's salary (VBST Minutes, 1912a). The content of her lectures is not known. A speech delivered many years later to the home economics section of the British Columbia Teachers Federation gave evidence of her view of home economics as a whole philosophy of life. The Victoria Colonist newspaper account of that speech indicated that "Ravenhill not only spoke in terms of the dignity of life but argued that the home had a dignified place in the scheme of things where the foundations for physical and spiritual well being were set". Because of this, home economics should be regarded as something "far beyond mere dish washing... Every inmate of the home should be taught to take his share in the household operations, not for payment but for pure love of service" ("Home basis ", 1931, p. 7).

By such means, Ravenhill made explicit the moral dimension of home economics in British Columbia. She supported the fundamental importance of home economics as "the basis of national health, as a branch of civics and as the profession which is pursued by not less than 90 per cent

of the women in the world" (Ravenhill, 1924, p. 163). In Ravenhill's definition, home economics included "the development of efficiency through the right care and culture of human life in the home" (Ravenhill, 1924, p. 163). The "right care and culture" was undoubtedly British in nature.

Alice Ravenhill has been characterized as a maternal feminist (Stewart, 1990, p. 47) for expressing the view that home economics provided a solution to the nation's social problems and represented a practical choice of study for women. However, as Daniels and Bayliss (1985) argue, it makes more sense to look at her life and work in context than to compare present day feminism with the feminism of the turn of the century. What Ravenhill contributed to home economics in British Columbia was a strong belief in the role of home economics to improve health and hygiene standards and a continual willingness to bolster its position.

British Columbia's loss was the failure to recognize Ravenhill's achievement of establishing household science at King's College, University of London, and to use that expertise to establish a Chair of Home Economics at the University of British Columbia. Stewart's (1990) study of women at UBC in the early days documents how the opposition of influential women such as Evelyn Farris to home economics caused a crucial delay in the attainment of a Chair of Home Economics. Farris believed that the introduction of practical training for women "imperilled their intellectual

development and endangered the value of philosophical learning" (Stewart, 1990, p. 45). In a 1914 newspaper debate with Ravenhill, Farris upheld the benefits of a liberal education. Alice Ravenhill in turn argued that if the liberal arts were so effective in education, why were the health standards in Canada so low? Ravenhill's practicality eventually won out over Farris' concerns, but not until 1943 when a Chair of Home Economics finally became permanent. Despite her international reputation, Ravenhill could not overcome the local political power of Evelyn Farris, wife of the Attorney-General and possessor of a master's degree in philosophy.

After being denied a seat on the Board of Governors of the University of British Columbia (Vancouver LCW Minutes, 1912b), Ravenhill turned her attentions to Women's Institute work and lecturing in the United States. She had relatively little to do with home economics in the public school system after about 1915 (Smith, 1989). One person who probably benefited a great deal from Alice Ravenhill's presence was Elizabeth Berry. They travelled together to a home economics conference in Seattle (Vancouver LCW Minutes, 1912a) from which Berry reported that she would return home "filled with new ideas for the furthering of their work". It was possibly Ravenhill's influence that led Elizabeth Berry to take a leave of absence to attend Columbia University in New York from September, 1912 to April, 1913 (VBST Minutes, 1912b). After her return, Berry wrote in her annual report

that "the future for this branch [high school] of our courses of study begins to look bright" (VBST Annual Report, 1913, p. 64).

A second person who influenced home economics in British Columbia was John Kyle, Technical Education Organizer for the provincial department of education after 1915.⁸ Through his extensive art background, Kyle added cultural aesthetics as a reason to teach home economics.

Part of Kyle's position included responsibility for domestic science. The establishment of domestic science centres rested on the good graces of the local school boards and until 1913 Victoria and Vancouver had the only centres. Outlying regions were constrained by the expense of setting up properly-equipped rooms and the difficulty of obtaining qualified teachers. Home economics supporters had to manoeuvre politically in order to establish centres. School inspectors regarded domestic science very favourably and tried to contrive ways of establishing it. Inspector Alexander Dove suggested that the problem of added expense might be met if the manual training teacher were able to teach drawing and science and the domestic science teacher, language and literature (ARPS, 1915-1916, p. A39). In 1915 John Kyle reported eight cities and nine rural municipalities had domestic science centres (ARPS, 1914-15, p. A88). Even though domestic science had expanded, it was still not accessible to the majority of students. Figures

obtained from the Public Schools Report for 1914-15 indicate that about twenty percent of all high school students (801 of 3912) were taking domestic science. In the elementary schools, which constituted the larger part of the program, only about eleven per cent of all students in attendance were enrolled in domestic science (just under 6000 out of a school population of 52,000). Assuming that home economics was limited to girls, the figures indicated that less than half of the school population had access to it. In 1915-16 a government grant was made available to rural municipalities to set up manual training workshops. Kyle noted that Chilliwack and Maple Ridge had set up several sewing classes in their schools under the guidance of the grade teachers (ARPS, 1915-16, p. A74). Sewing was taught by grade teachers in Vancouver and Victoria and technical standards were maintained by a sewing supervisor. Elizabeth Berry thought some training should be provided for the teaching of sewing, although a "vast amount was no more necessary for teaching elementary sewing than for teaching any other subject" (VBST Annual Report, 1917, p. 63). She noted that an advanced high school program depended on a firm foundation from elementary school instruction.

Training for rural teachers was imperative. The first Victoria Summer School of 1914 featured domestic science expressly directed to teachers working in districts with no specialists. The course, taught by Annie Juniper, Elizabeth Berry and Alice Boorman, among others, accounted for 113 out

of the total summer school enrolment of 513 (ARPS, 1914-15, p. A56). Domestic science teaching facilities were added to the new Victoria Normal School in 1915 and to the Vancouver Normal School in 1928.⁹ John Kyle suggested that teachers who wished to qualify as domestic science teachers be allowed to do so through night school and Saturday classes (ARPS, 1915-16, p. A74). Kyle's job included checking qualifications obtained out-of-province and fielding enquiries about the process of becoming qualified. He indicated that the approved route to become a domestic science teacher was to take regular teacher's training and then after having taught in the ordinary grades for at least one year, get special training at the Agricultural School in Winnipeg or the Lillian Massey-Treble School in Toronto (Kyle, 1921). Kyle repeatedly called for the establishment of household science at the university level. "Such a course is already to be found in Columbia University, New York and also London University, England and when one of a similar nature is introduced into the University of this Province arrangements will be completed to enable girls to matriculate from the Home-makers course [at King Edward High School] to that institution" (ARPS, 1918-19, p. A78). Kyle made good on part of his promise; home economics credits could be used for Normal School training. Matriculation credit was some years away.

John Kyle's support of home economics was crucial to its expansion. He willingly travelled around the province

speaking on the importance of education along "artistic as well as practical lines" (VBST Minutes, 1915). He supported progressive education ideals: "the child first learns by doing; reading about methods comes last in order" (Kyle, 1922, p. 1). Kyle noted how women's work had changed with industrialization and how the interest of the state was "at one with women's justifiable demands for opportunity and education to develop the powers implanted in their natures" (Kyle, 1922, p. 1). Kyle accepted two lines of education for girls -"first along the lines of household science...and second along the lines of some industrial occupation" (Kyle, 1922, p. 1). An article written for the Cowichan Leader gives evidence of his Deweyan perspective on manual training and domestic science. He viewed them as:

educational means to a practical end....Pride in creative work fires ambition, develops initiative and inculcates those qualities which make for good citizenship....Nature intended the adjustments of hand, eye and mind to be trained when the human is young, and the work of this adjustment is called simply education, not technical education [emphasis added]. (Kyle, no date)

Retrenchment and Dissatisfaction

Despite the effects of the First World War, home economics education developed confidently in British Columbia until economic recession in 1916.¹⁰ When the

provincial coffers became depleted, subjects such as home economics which depended heavily on the financial goodwill of School Boards were attacked as 'fads and frills'. The move of the Vancouver School Board to dismiss all supervisors of practical education subjects in 1916 drew the ire of the Vancouver Council of Women (Vancouver LCW Minutes, 1916a). Part of the reason for the dismissals was attributed to the competency of the supervisors. In 1915 J.S. Gordon, the Municipal Inspector of Schools for Vancouver reported that work in manual training and domestic science had been so well planned by the supervisors that an increase in staff had not been required in spite of expansion of the programs to another high school. "We found," wrote Gordon, "that the supervisors were able to do the teaching and attend to their supervising as well" (ARPS, 1914-15, p. A49). Upon receiving word of the impending dismissals, the Local Council of Women felt obligated to guard the interests of manual training and domestic science "since the Council had been the means of establishing these departments in the schools" (Vancouver LCW Minutes, 1916b). Although the entire School Board attended an LCW meeting to present both sides of the issue, the dismissals took place anyway, with the Board citing "retrenchment" as its reason (VBST Minutes, 1916a). The politically sensitive position of practical education had been reinforced. Its introduction and continuation was at the whim of the School Board. An interesting consequence of the whole matter was a

later request from the Board to the Minister of Education to appoint to the provincial staff of inspectors "a woman who will be competent to inspect home economics work in the schools" (VBST Minutes, 1916b).

Dissatisfaction with practical education schooling in British Columbia was growing. The High School Inspector, John DeLong, questioned the "wisdom of asking girls of household arts classes to cover the geometry demanded of the academic class" since the course did not meet matriculation requirements anyway (ARPS, 1917-18, p. D19). In the same year, Inspector W.H. May complained about cooking commencing at too early an age and the lack of effort to extend domestic science to girls in Saanich, a district where manual training had been offered to boys for six years (ARPS, 1917-18, p. D23).

The role of practical education in the school system was ambiguous. A.J. Dove, the Inspector for Kamloops commented on the "restless criticism of the press" about practical subjects.

Insistence has been laid on the suggestion that education should be made more 'practical'. Our curricula should be denuded of all studies not directly convertible to dollars and cents....[In fact] the most practical education is that which makes the most and the best of the man [sic] himself, not that which merely puts a tool in his hand for living. (ARPS, 1917-18, p. D31)

Could practical education be truly practical if it did not teach a technical skill? Alternately, could skills be taught in a practical sense in an artificial school setting? Inspector Dove confused the issue further by stating that "human education" was liberal, leading to highly important "practical value", but that practical studies in themselves had an insufficient "human value" (ARPS, 1917-18, p. D31).

John Kyle criticized the failure of domestic science teachers to maintain standards that would legitimate their subject academically. He urged the mapping out of a three-year course in order to "marshal a course of lessons that are pedagogically sound" (ARPS, 1917-18, p. D65). Kyle reported a year later that the freedom given to home economics teachers to plan their courses to suit their communities had worked against them. Too much theory was being taught during the first year and the courses of study were frequently "scrappy and poorly graded" (ARPS, 1918-19, p. C84). Kyle noted a certain lack of attention paid to "judicious repetition and a building of the unknown upon that which is already known". In addition more care was needed in order to develop habits "above reproach" regarding the wearing of aprons, caps and thimbles. Kyle called for the hiring of a "thoroughly trained progressive teacher of home economics who would be competent to inspect the classes already in existence as well as organize new classes" (ARPS, 1918-19, p. C84). Other inspectors attributed the decline of quality in domestic science classes to lack of

supervision following the resumption of regular teaching duties by Elizabeth Berry and the sewing supervisor (ARPS, 1917-18, A40).

No one was very happy with the integrative nature of practical arts except for J.W. Gibson, the Director of Elementary Agricultural Education. In a report that perhaps thrilled J.W. Robertson, Gibson cited a practical education project from Enderby under the supervision of the agricultural, domestic science and manual training teachers:

[The] high school students served a dinner to forty guests, all the vegetables for which were grown in the school garden, and the fowl fattened, killed, plucked and cooked by the children of the school. The meal fully demonstrated how quickly and whole-heartedly the pupils enter into this branch of studies. A more perfectly cooked and savory meal would be hard to find.

(ARPS, 1917-18, p. A62)

Such examples of learning by doing were rare. For Gibson, it was likely a golden moment of the short-lived school garden movement.¹¹ Truly integrated projects in nature study, manual training and domestic science ran contrary to the way schools operated. Constrained by facilities and seasons, practical education simply did not fit into the school system.

Riley's 1984 study of women who took domestic science in Victoria schools between 1910 and 1930 generated various examples of the difficulties of linking home and school

practice. As well the study raised questions about the imposition of middle class standards in home economics. The respondents recalled domestic science as requiring considerably more equipment than at home; students were allowed to prepare only "finicky dabs and dabs" of food; and indigestion was the result of a Waldorf salad never made at home because the family could not afford to buy celery or nuts (Riley, 1984, p. 172).

When economic conditions improved in 1921, Elizabeth Berry was rehired as a fulltime supervisor for the Vancouver School Board (VBST Annual Report, 1921, p. 26). She encountered two major problems; the lack of recognition of home economics as a matriculation credit and the standards of the courses themselves. The three-year home economics course at King Edward High School had been intended to prepare girls for university on the basis that courses in physiology, hygiene, home sanitation, foods, dietetics, cookery, clothing and art should replace one foreign language and geometry (VBST Annual Report, 1921, p. 72). The enrolment in the course had grown very little, from 17 students in 1917 to only 47 in 1921, attributed by Irene Moody, School Board Chair, to its being a "blind alley, not leading to university" (VBST Annual Report, 1920, p. 12). Events such as the 1922 King Edward "Open House" had great political value in publicizing the worth of home economics. It included practical demonstrations by the students on hat-making, collars and cuffs, satin flowers and the proper way

to make a bed in five minutes ("King Edward High School", 1922). An article publicizing the event ended with several exhortative columns about the need to have home economics recognized as a matriculation subject because it had been "scientifically systematized" and its value was equivalent to "scientific agriculture" ("King Edward High School", 1922, p. 10).

The second problem was standards. Elizabeth Berry found that elementary sewing had greatly deteriorated after five years of no supervision. One of the home economics teachers, S.L. Mutch, had surveyed 41 elementary sewing classes and determined that 28 were doing unsatisfactory work:

The material results vary from 'bad to worse'. As an educational factor in the child's life the time spent is worse than useless and from a monetary standpoint the materials are wasted. The teachers lack knowledge of both the theory and practice - in 12 cases they know absolutely nothing. (VBST Annual Report, 1920, p. 80)

J.S. Gordon, Inspector of Vancouver Schools offered the following rationale for reintroduction of supervision. It was necessary because "the teachers come from so many different places [and] consequently have different ideas and methods [that] closer supervision is essential to secure the measure of uniformity desirable in a system where children move so frequently" (VBST Annual Report, 1921, p. 26). Higher technical standards were seen as essential for

uniformity. Berry included an additional message in urging greater cooperation between school departments: "The aim of home economics is not simply teaching 'sewing' and 'cooking' alone but [also] to teach 'right living'" (VBST Annual Report, 1921, p. 72).

Questions were being raised about academic legitimacy. The British Columbia Parent-Teacher Federation supported a resolution at its 1923 annual convention asking that the present home economics course work be recognized by giving it proper matriculation standing ("Resolutions passed", 1923). It was felt that this step would raise homemaking in the estimation of all girls. "If the credit given is not commensurate with other branches [of education] is it any wonder [home economics] is not held in much respect?" ("Matriculation credit", 1923, p. 4). The supporters of the resolution declared that "[home economics] was as educationally sound as any course in the general high school and moreover was a better preparation for the life of most of our girls" ("Recognition of Home Economics", 1923, p. 4).

Home economics was also expected to teach certain moral values. The Victoria Council of Women was concerned that "[domestic science] as taught has not been up to the present as useful as it might be to the nation" ("Victoria Local Council", 1924, p. 3). The Kelowna Parent-Teacher Association asked for a mass meeting to discuss the home economics question ("Matriculation credit", 1923, p. 4). The result was a request to S.J. Willis, Superintendent of

Education for an "enquiry into the methods used in the teaching of home economics ...with a view to selecting a uniform syllabus, and one which would be in conformity with home methods" ("Home economics", 1924, p. 3).

The end result, reported by Western Woman's Weekly, was recognition of the importance of the essential practical focus of home economics. A committee of home economics teachers and parents was formed, and on the request of John Kyle, a survey of parents was made to determine what they wanted. The survey revealed that "the mothers want for their girls systematic training that only the home economics course can give. These courses are kept up to date while homes are inclined to run in a rut" ("Home economics", 1924, p.4). An appointed committee made three recommendations: that a provincial supervisor be appointed, that home economics be made compulsory in schools of the first and second class, and that a course for home economics be established at the University level ("Home economics", 1924).

The action taken by S.J. Willis, Provincial Superintendent of Education, in response to the matriculation credit resolution was to accept four papers (cookery, dietetics, dressmaking and millinery, and drawing and design) in place of the junior matriculation geometry paper ("Recognition of home economics", 1923). This was not full matriculation credit. Junior matriculation enabled students to go to Normal School but geometry was still

required for university entrance. As well, it was questionable whether students' knowledge of a practical subject such as millinery could be adequately examined in a pen-and-paper test. Did the mere fact of being examinable make a practical subject equivalent to an academic one? These concerns were not addressed.

Justification for Home Economics in the Schools

Between 1903 and 1924, the justification for home economics in the school system assumed academic, practical and moral attributes. Alice Ravenhill re-entered the debate about the value of domestic science in 1924. Ida Mackay, Supervisor of Home Economics for Point Grey argued in a B.C. Teacher article that home economics teachers could be adequately trained in a well-organized technical school. A university course in home economics would merely open up the field to those who could best afford it and who perhaps would "never feel the necessity of earning their livelihood" (Mackay, 1924, p. 184). In a letter to the editor of the B.C. Teacher, Ravenhill retorted that the scope of home economics embraced much more than the crafts of cooking, cleaning, needlework and general housewifery. Therefore its teaching required the resources of a university which included biology, chemistry, physics, physiology and architecture. Technical schools might suit some people, but nothing less than university would suffice "for those who aspire to a thorough preparation for their responsibilities

as homemakers, teachers, social workers, institution managers... who are alive to their civic responsibilities and who realize that the foundations of national efficiency are laid in the home" (Ravenhill, 1924, p. 163).

Ravenhill's statement ignored some of the realities of the school system, but it made explicit the ideology which differentiated home economics from other forms of practical education. Manual training was usually defended on cultural grounds for its capacity to build individual "character" rather than train future industrial workers (Wilson, 1985). Home economics was justified as vocational training for future homemakers in addition to providing training for women in civic responsibility. For example, J.W. Gibson claimed that domestic science found its place in the school system "chiefly for its practical value", but manual training had been introduced "partly with job-preparation in view and partly for its cultural influences on the general powers of the pupils" (ARPS, 1919-20, p. C49). A high school principal defending the junior high school concept described schooling as having two sides - academic and practical: "In the woodwork, metalwork, science and drawing we cultivate the most valuable forms of self-expression, while in cookery and sewing and physiology we are training the girls to be good housewives and mothers" (Herd, 1923, p. 10).

A Vancouver teacher, M.E. Pope, provided an alternate viewpoint to the growing trend of emphasizing societal

reasons for teaching home economics. She was concerned that girls had lost interest in school because it "aimed to send out students all patterned from the same mold". Pope advocated the junior high school for developing students' recognition of their own needs, and home economics to teach them to cope successfully with later individual life problems. Echoing Ellen Richards, Pope wrote that "the health and happiness of the nation are bound up in the foods we eat, the clothes we wear, and the surroundings in which we live" (Pope, 1923, p. 11).

Elizabeth Berry justified the place of home economics in the curriculum because women had the "right to benefit in their just share of [educational] money...[and] for the right to what appeals to them in subject matter" (Berry, 1922, p. 2). Teachers in the past, said Berry, had merely dealt with the mechanical processes of cooking and sewing, but now recognized the necessity of including production, hygiene, economics, art and the study of family relationships. Because "no one denies the value of a good home as a social force" (Berry, 1922) home economics offered authoritative information which would direct women's education toward solving family maintenance problems. Berry's opinions echoed a back-to-the-home movement which had begun after the First World War (Dyhouse, 1978). It emphasized women's moral responsibility for healthy families, regardless of their own interests.

Another common idea about the worth of domestic science was engendered by the social gospel movement; "a Protestant middle class movement which sought to improve the lives of the poor through combatting of liquor and sexual promiscuity and through the promotion of hygienic practices and Christian morality" (Patterson, 1990, p. 81). Rosalinde Young (the wife of Henry Esson Young, one-time Minister of Education) provided domestic science with a particular moral motive in a speech delivered to the Home Economics Section of the Provincial Teachers' Institute ("Report of Home Economics Sectional Meetings", 1924, p. 240). Young asked why domestic science was considered a frill when it included economy and health, "two topics of absorbing interest to our generation". She continued:

When the teaching of domestic science was inaugurated in this province twenty years ago, sewing, cooking and cleaning were the whole thing. These are but means to an end. The subject has expanded to mean Good Home Membership and is treated from an economic and scientific aspect....To put homes on a proper basis is fundamental. In that Frillists and Anti-Frillists agree. The only hope for our race is in imbueing the young with high ideals of home life. This is what a domestic science course should do. Have you no pride of race? Do you want the Anglo-Saxon to survive? Statisticians tell us that to keep the proportion of Anglo-Saxon to foreign born just as it is now every

woman must bear four children. Each living individual should feel this responsibility toward the betterment of the race. (Young, 1924, p. 21)

Young's composite picture of economic, scientific, classist and eugenic motives for teaching home economics was rooted in Canadian fear of Asian superiority. During the 1920's, British Columbia had the "most virulent examples of racial intolerance in twentieth-century Canadian history" (Roy, 1990, p. 285). Young's opinions represented the preservation of British Imperialist culture in addition to teaching the poor and those of lower moral standing how to improve their lives. Within progressive education thought, the 'home' was both the problem and the solution. Home economics was intended to produce socially responsible citizens, when the home failed in its responsibility or was culturally divergent from the prevailing British mode.

Another reason for home economics education was to provide domestic service, similar to that provided by the Victorian Order of Nurses. The Victoria LCW advocated home economics in the high school "to accommodate naturally the young minds to the dignity of such service" ("Setting our households", 1924).

Because the school population had greatly increased, individual differences became a factor in education. A contemporary writer in Western Woman's Weekly condemned the school system for turning out "so many misfits", claiming that it was because the educational system practically

forbid free enquiry, endeavouring instead to "produce belief rather than thought" and treating "knowledge as the way to a livelihood" (Prenter, 1923, p. 1). This concept of "living a life" rather than "making a living" had many implications for home economics, seen both as a woman's vocation and a means of improving society.

What was the state of home economics education in 1924? As proclaimed by Mary Urie Watson, home economics offered a means of honest and unambiguous expression. Home economics would inculcate young girls with exemplary habits with the goal of achieving "right living". Some of these concepts still find place today, such as orderliness, cleanliness and the "home ideal".

However, the inclusion of home economics in the school system signalled the development of contradictory ideas; recognition of the practical value of home economics with the expectation that it would conform to academic school standards. Witness, for example the many attempts to equate home economics with geometry. Practical value alone was insufficient to give home economics sufficient status in the male-oriented school system. Women's groups were the most vocal supporters but the implementation decisions were made by men.

The teaching of technical skills was promoted as the means of improving moral standing to meet middle-class values. If students did not reach desired technical

standards, the home was blamed; the failure of the grade four sewing class to keep their sewing pristine was attributed to their inferior homes and mothers ("Casual Comment", 1912b).

Pioneer home economics supporters struggled to achieve legitimacy for their subject within the ambivalency of a practical subject conforming to academic standards. Elizabeth Berry's solution was to emphasize the "educative" aspects after mastery of technical skills. Alice Ravenhill promoted university-training of teachers to broaden the practical focus of home economics. Whereas in 1905 Elizabeth Berry was mainly concerned with obtaining the right kind of equipment, her successor in 1925 had an obligation to integrate practical and cultural values in a moral context.

At the same time, increasing education requirements for occupations, population growth and economic changes in British Columbia made reform of the school system almost inevitable. A malaise had come over education in general in British Columbia and a stock-taking was in order.

Chapter Two Endnotes

1. James Robertson (1857-1930), Scottish emigrant, cheesemaker, Principal of Macdonald College and chairman of the Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education [RCITTE] was instrumental in the spread of manual training in Canada. With Sir William Macdonald, the tobacco millionaire, Robertson concocted a scheme to restore rural values and arrest rural decay, first in a seed-growing competition and later in the establishment of 24 manual-training centres across Canada beginning in 1900. Teachers' salaries were paid for the first three years after which time many centres continued under their own steam. Sutherland (1976) reported the growth of manual training centres in British Columbia from four in 1900-01 to fifty-eight in 1918-19. Robertson's rationale for manual training, delivered to the Ottawa School Board in 1899, stated that "the main endeavour should be to lead out the mind by nourishing ideas, rather than to cram in unprofitable facts" (Robertson, 1899). Much fascinating information about Robertson can be gathered from the Robertson Papers housed in the Special Collections Division, University of British Columbia Library. Upon his death, condolences were sent from (among others) Annie Juniper and J.H. Putman of whom mention will be made presently. For further information, see:

Pavey, E.J. (1971). James Wilson Robertson, Public Servant and Educator. Unpublished magistral thesis. University of British Columbia.

Robertson, J.W. (1899). Manual training in public schools: The Macdonald school sloyd fund. Robertson papers, Special Collections Division, University of British Columbia Library.

Sutherland, N. (1976). Children in English-Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth-Century Consensus. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. (pp. 182-201).

2. The Local Councils of Women (LCW) and their parent body the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) are inextricably linked to the spread of home economics in the public school system. Strong-Boag (1977) states that the immediate impulse behind the formation of the NCWC was the International Council of Women who met at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. Underlying the formation of the NCWC was the belief that the state, under the influence of industrialization and urbanization was weakened at its most vulnerable point - the family. Lady Ishbel Aberdeen, first President of the National Council, had close links to

British Columbia. She and her husband, the Governor-General of Canada, owned Coldspring Ranch near Vernon, B.C. and Lady Aberdeen helped found the Victoria LCW in 1894. For further information, see:

French, Doris. (1988). Ishbel and the Empire: A Biography of Lady Aberdeen. Toronto and Oxford: Dundurn Press.

Strong-Boag, V. (1977). Setting the stage: National organization and the women's movement in the late 19th century. In S.M. Trofimenkoff & A. Prentice (Eds.) The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.

3. The 'hollow square' provided individual equipment for every student. One of the best descriptions of the hollow square, including photographs of rooms and equipment at Macdonald Institute, Guelph, is located in:
Kinne, Helen. (1911). Equipment for Teaching Domestic Science. Boston: Whitcomb & Barrows.

Kinne addressed the problem of group versus individual instruction in terms which are applicable today:
[In individual instruction] the pupils lack all opportunity for dealing in the normal quantity used in the family. In the group method the child never has full responsibility from beginning to end for any one article. Small quantities give the pupil little opportunity to develop skill; yet a normal quantity is costly. (Kinne, 1911, p. 70).

Kinne ends with a quote: "As Mrs. Kedzie has said, 'Kitchen utensils cost less than coffins'" (p. 76). Edith Rowles Simpson (1964) also refers to Mrs. Kedzie, an apparently unrecognized home economics pioneer.

4. Much has been written about Adelaide Hoodless. Consult the following sources for differing perspectives:

Crowley, T. (1986). Madonnas before Magdalenes: Adelaide Hoodless and the making of the Canadian Gibson girl. Canadian Historical Review, 67 (4), 520-547.

McDonald, C. (1986). Adelaide Hoodless: Domestic crusader. Toronto: Dundurn Press.

Crowley is critical of Hoodless and raises the possibility that Mary Urie Watson 'ghostwrote' Adelaide Hoodless' home economics text Domestic Science in the Public School (1898). McDonald's biography is sympathetic to Hoodless.

5. Of a wealth of information on John Dewey, two sources are particularly relevant to home economics:

DePencier, I. (1967). The history of the Laboratory Schools: The University of Chicago 1896-1965. Chicago: Quadrangle Books.

Dewey, John. (1938). Experience and Education. New York: Macmillan.

6. Annie Juniper was a founding member of the Manitoba Home Economics Association in 1911 (Wilson, 1966, p. 177) which eventually formed the basis for the Canadian Home Economics Association. A former Manitoba student described her as "well-bred, cultured and clever" (Wilson, 1966, p. 41). The Girls' Home Manual became a well-beloved fixture in many Victoria homes. Juniper left Victoria to assist at home in England during the First World War but later returned to B.C. She went on to become a pioneer in New Zealand home economics and finally Principal of Leeds College of Housecraft, England (Daily Colonist, August 26, 1926, p. 1).

A letter of condolence to J.W. Robertson's widow, Jennie, included the whimsical suggestion that Mrs. Robertson might, like Lady Conan Doyle, "commune with her dear husband in spirit" (Robertson Papers, Special Collections Division, University of British Columbia Library, January 16, 1931).

Annie Juniper was warmly remembered in Victoria after her death in December, 1933 (Daily Colonist, February 11, 1934, p. C7).

7. Alice Ravenhill (1859-1954) was an "international pioneer in home economics, the first woman to be conferred a fellowship of the Royal Sanitary Institute in England, and an authority on public health, noted for her stimulating public lectures" (Smith, 1989, p. 10). She was instrumental in the establishment of courses in household science at King's College, University of London. At the age of fifty, and at the peak of her career, she emigrated with family members to Shawnigan Lake on Vancouver Island. For further information see Ravenhill's assorted papers in Special Collections Division, University of British Columbia Library, including her autobiography, published when she was over ninety years old:

Ravenhill, A. (1951). Alice Ravenhill: The Memoirs of an Educational Pioneer. Toronto: Dent.

A source which outlines Ravenhill's career before her "wasted life as a pioneer housewife" is:

Daniels, C. and Bayliss, R. (1985). Alice Ravenhill, home economist, 1859-1954. Westminster Journal of Education, 8, 21-36.

For a Canadian perspective on Ravenhill, see:

Smith, M. Gale. (1989). Alice Ravenhill: International pioneer in home economics. Illinois Teacher, 33 (1), 10-14.

8. John Kyle was born at Hawick, Scotland on Sept. 7, 1871 to Andrew and Agnes (Waugh) Kyle. He was apprenticed to a watchmaker but showed an early aptitude for drawing. Through night school he managed to obtain an art teacher's certificate and was awarded a scholarship to the London College of Art, from which he was made an Associate of the Royal Academy of Art in 1900. Kyle taught at Huddersfield, Yorkshire and Alloa, Scotland, and came to Vancouver in 1905 as the Supervisor of Drawing. Subsequently he was made Night School Director and in 1914 became Director of Technical Education for the Province. His background probably led to his interest in and promotion of home economics particularly in relation to art and design. For further information, see:

Slinn, Edward H. (1979). John Kyle - A Short Biography. Unpublished major paper. Vancouver, B.C.

9. For more information about the Victoria and Vancouver Normal Schools, consult:

Calam, J. (1984). Teaching the teachers: Establishment and early years of the B.C. provincial normal schools. B.C. Studies, 61 (Spring), 30-63.

10. See Ormsby (1971) and Robin (1972) for more specific information on the 1916 economic and political crises.

11. Examples of the difficulties encountered by the school garden movement can be found in Sutherland (1976), pp. 186-189. See also:

Jones, David. (1978). "We cannot allow it to be run by those who do not understand education" - Agricultural schooling in the Twenties. B.C. Studies, 39 (Autumn), 30-60.

CHAPTER III PUTMAN AND WEIR SURVEY THE BRITISH COLUMBIA SCHOOL SYSTEM

The 1924-25 survey of the British Columbia School system by J.H. Putman and George Weir has become a landmark in Canadian educational history. It stands out as "one of the first surveys, if not the first, official document of a department of education to discuss and recommend ideas and practices of the new education" (Patterson, 1990, p. 99). This chapter examines the conditions and circumstances of the survey which Putman and Weir conducted in the fall of 1924 and spring of 1925. They published their Report on the Survey of the School System in 1925. In considering the Report, this chapter explores the prevailing politics and demographics of British Columbia, the administration of the survey and specific home economics recommendations. The survey is important to this study for the way in which it redefined practical education, and is particularly useful for elaborating upon academic/cultural and practical/vocational values in home economics education. Background for the survey has been developed in order to locate home economics within the progressive education movement.

Prelude to the School Survey

The campaign that led to the survey actually began in 1921. The Union of British Columbia Municipalities made the

first move when it undertook an extensive public relations campaign to have the government take a more active role in school reform. This powerful group wanted to shift school financial responsibility to the provincial government rather than maintain the local ratepayer base of funding (Wood, 1985).

As indicated previously, the educational community and various volunteer associations also supported change in the schools. The second annual Parent-Teacher Educational conference in 1922 was held in conjunction with the Easter Convention of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF). The cooperation between the two organizations seemed to be "a happy augury and practical sign of...tremendous possibilities of accomplishments" ("Second Annual", 1922, p. 1). Most of the discussion at the meeting centred around the purpose of school surveys with speakers referring to the Saskatchewan school survey of 1915 and the forthcoming Seattle school survey.

Education as a whole had a reformist stance, and a major concern was how to keep students under school influence through reduction in the dropout rate. A Vancouver school principal reported the following statistics: of 1000 six-year olds who entered the school system in 1903, 600 finished public school. Of those, 300 went on to high school and 111 completed it. Thirty-eight went on to university, and 14

graduated (Sparling, 1922, p. 1). Such statistics seemed to indicate a lot of people were completely beyond the influence of education. One writer declared that there was "more need for the work of missionaries in the streets of Vancouver than...in the jungles of Africa" (Sherman, 1922, p. 2).

The British Columbia Teachers Federation requested a school survey by sending resolutions to the Department of Education ("Easter Convention", 1922). The High School Section and the Principals and Senior Grades Section each called for a survey on the grounds that "the current high school curriculum made no provision for students not going on to university... and the present course in Normal school did not provide for instruction in certain subjects which candidates were asked to teach" ("Easter Convention", 1922, p.20).

The British Columbia legislature was reluctant to initiate a school survey. Consequently, a delegation headed by Major H.B. King appeared before the Municipal Committee of the Legislature in November of 1923 in an effort to convince it that the purpose of a survey was not to find weaknesses in the current school system, but rather to be viewed as a "stock-taking" ("Editorial- the Legislature", 1924, p. 97). In 1923, the Liberals had been in power for seven years, first under H.C. Brewster and then under the premiership of John Oliver. There were many more pressing financial

concerns than the undertaking of a comprehensive school survey.¹

Despite the concern of British Columbians that their educational system was inferior, the province compared positively to the rest of Canada in health and education statistics. The main difference was the larger immigrant population.² This may have inspired many volunteer women's groups to organize for political change and not incidentally work to preserve the essentially British character. Western Woman's Weekly, a Vancouver newsmagazine edited by Amy Kerr and her sister Alice Pogue, exemplified the powerful interaction in British Columbia between politics and women's groups. From 1917 to 1924, the magazine contributed considerably to the cause of home economics education. The foreword of the first issue set out the mission of the publication:

The great need of women today is a medium whereby they may assure unification and centralization of their aims in the interests of and for the betterment of the public. Men use the press for their purposes....It is the purpose of Western Woman's Weekly to perform a similar office for the women of British Columbia.

("Introductory issue", 1917)

The official announcement of a school survey for British Columbia was made in April of 1924 but Premier Oliver delayed

announcing the names of the commissioners until the eve of the general election in June.³ Dr. J.H. Putman and Dr. George Weir were named as commissioners to conduct a school survey intended to "embrace an investigation of every angle of education in British Columbia" ("Announcement of Survey", 1924, p. 172). Within a few days of the announcement, the provincial election was held and all three party leaders defeated, as were J. W. Farris and Mary Ellen Smith, Liberal supporters of the school survey. The Liberals held onto power in a minority government, but education was not a priority in a government beset with railway, timber and liquor control act controversies (Robin, 1972).

Administration of the School Survey

John Harold Putman⁴ (1866 - 1940), Chairman of the School Survey had been recommended for the position by his old friend J.W. Gibson, the B.C. Supervisor of Agricultural Education in B.C. (Gibson, 1961). Putman had already taught at the Victoria Summer School (ARPS, 1921-22, p. C64) and was greeted by the B.C. Teacher as the "most qualified man in Canada to undertake the job" ("Announcement of Survey", 1924, p. 172). Putman believed strongly that practical education or 'handwork' would instill cultural values, stating that "progress in skill with the hand has ever gone step by step with any advance in human intelligence" (Putman, 1938, p.

93). Putman saw no confusion between cultural and vocational values in education: "We teach crafts in school...for their educational value just as we teach literature or history....We teach crafts because they give intellectual stimulus and develop a sense of power" (Putman, 1938, p. 102).

George Weir⁵ (1885-1949) was already a resident of British Columbia in 1924, in charge of the Department of Education at the University of British Columbia. Hawkes (1924) called George Weir "one of the most popular educators in the Dominion" (p. 1284). A committee of specialists⁶ was assembled to help Weir and Putman in what Wood (1985) termed a "research and propaganda mission" (p. 151).

Inequality and inflexibility in the methods of the survey became issues almost immediately. An article in the Prince George Citizen questioned whether cities and outside districts were being treated equally ("School Survey now", 1924). Other criticisms came out of the actual proceedings. Putman and Weir held 215 open sessions in four months (Wood, 1985). Although the Survey was supposed to be fact-finding, it often turned into exhortations about education, usually from Putman who was no unbiased researcher. At the first open session the Daily Colonist reported that Putman "agreed with the view of the Rotary Club that teachers should impress upon their students the dignity of labor and the value of

practical knowledge. Any teacher who did not do this... was not fit for his or her position" ("Education should", 1924, p. 1). The Daily Colonist later accused the commissioners of having "embarked on the task with preconceived notions" instead of fulfilling the objective of making state education more efficient and providing a check on financial outlays ("Editorial", 1924, p. 2). When the survey took longer than the projected six months, the Victoria Daily Colonist hastened to point out that "there were educationists available who would have undertaken [the enquiry] as a labor of love" ("Editorial", 1924, p. 2). A labor of love was not what the commissioners delivered.

A 556-page school survey report was finally presented to the Department of Education in May, 1925. After setting out the parameters of the survey and describing their population, the commissioners answered nineteen mandated questions and provided sixteen recommendations of their own. Putman and Weir explained how the British Columbia school system had developed, using the metaphor "growing like Topsy". The aim of the survey was the "possible improvement of a provincial school system" (Report, 1925, p. iii). Having been instructed to "hew to the line" in their investigation of education, Weir and Putman commended the participants in the survey for their cooperation and lack of defensiveness. The commissioners admitted that some changes in the school system

would inevitably be required, but "no official or government could justly be held responsible for the merits or defects of its evolution" (Report, 1925, p.5). They then proceeded to evaluate and indict the school system, while promoting relatively little change and producing what Mann (1978) has called an essentially conservative document. How was this possible and what were the effects upon home economics?

Content of the Putman-Weir Report

In the first four chapters, presumably written by George Weir,⁷ the commissioners laid out their framework, assumptions and justifications. Putman and Weir constructed five public opinion groups and placed themselves squarely in the centre group of progressives who were in favour of vocational guidance, adoption of the platoon system, increased vocational education for girls as well as boys and systematic use of achievement and intelligence tests (Report, 1925, p. 14).

Putman and Weir said the key concept in general school objectives was "practical efficiency" (Report, 1925, p. 36). Their definition of the educated person had particular significance for home economics because it integrated two crucial variables, cultural and practical viewpoints on education:

Any well-rounded education while emphasizing individual differences should stress in greater degree the paramount duty and importance of harmonizing such development with social needs and obligations....No complete system of education can afford to neglect these moral and spiritual values [i.e. development of intellect for the service of others as well as of self, the enriching and refining of the emotions, the appreciation of one's duties to one's fellows and to the body politic] which are basic in any true estimate of life....It will be obvious that no antagonism should exist between the so-called cultural and practical viewpoints. Idealism and realism are complementaries in a well-rounded life. The true realist applies his culture in practical ways (Report, 1925, p. 38).

Two statements are outstanding for the purposes of this study: "no antagonism should exist between the so-called cultural and practical viewpoints" and "the true realist applies his culture in practical ways". The word 'practical' had replaced 'vocational' as an adjective which described more concrete types of instruction as well as signifying that schooling was intended for more than job-training. It had to contribute to "character-building and social usefulness" (Report, 1925, p. 39). A properly allotted curriculum should have a broad cultural base related to present and future

problems and needs as well as to the past. The Report addressed home economics directly by proclaiming that meaningful education was grounded in real-life purposes of everyday life. The Report quoted John Dewey's aphorism "education is life" to indicate that education should be more than "preparation for" life. W.J. Pitman, Chairman of the Prince George School Board provided an additional paraphrase "to make a life and to make a living" (Pitman, 1924, p. 4). The supreme objective was "to see life steadily and see it whole" (Report, 1925, p. 43). Such elevated sentiment could be transferred to curriculum and practice through a more comprehensive and extensive curriculum. High school education would be the "irreducible minimum", just as elementary school had been for the previous generation. The Canadian version of education for democracy was the "freedom to be, to do, to become *when duly subordinated to social obligations* [emphasis added]" (Report, 1925, p. 58). While education for democracy in America included a chance for social betterment, Canadian democratic education demanded a corresponding increase in social responsibility.

Support was apparent for the contention that the political basis for school subjects changed with the times and requirements of what constituted an educated citizen. The commissioners declared as fallacious Professor Adam Shortt's criticism that intellectual initiative and breadth

of vision of the average pupil had declined in spite of an increase in the number of teachers. The commissioners said such complaints were reminiscent of a time when the school was a much smaller part of the educational environment and the child was brought into daily contact with practical pursuits. Much responsibility had shifted to the school particularly in household science and manual arts now recognized as so essential a part of the curriculum. The school of fifty years past produced better results because it was restricted to pupils of higher intelligence, but the modern school had to be more sensitive to individual differences and lay more stress on character development. "Purposive activities" such as the project method would develop initiative and resourcefulness.⁸ A diversified junior high school curriculum was essential because the average intelligence of pupils had been lowered. The schools of the past had the same end as the ones proposed by Putman-Weir, but the wrong means. In this way, as Mann (1978) suggested, the School Survey was conservative: it sought to change the means of schooling, not the ends.

'Handwork', a favourite term of J. H. Putman, was considered crucial for adolescent development. Because adolescents lived in a real world, they had to engage in handwork that had social value. For earlier grades, the commissioners had recommended manual arts more on the line of

art and advanced paper-folding. The handwork might differ between girls and boys but that difference would be more apparent than real. What counted was the relationship between school work and home problems because "real education" arose out of life problems (Report, 1925, p. 75). Manual training and home economics were housed in a new division of schooling, the junior high. Improving and enriching the curriculum through practical education would keep children longer at school and give them some pre-vocational education. Other benefits of practical education included better use of existing school accommodation, cutting down on waste, and getting rid of the "baneful influence of rigid, written examinations" (Report, 1925, p. 76).

Two of the nineteen mandated questions of the School Survey concerned home economics. The first question queried the public school levels at which home economics should be taken, whether it should be made obligatory, and if a supervisor of domestic science for the province should be appointed. The second question asked directly about the relations between the high school household science course and the University of British Columbia ("School survey for British Columbia", 1924, p. 228).

Home economics was discussed under several categories in the Report. A broad and elastic curriculum was recommended for the programme of the intermediate or junior high school.

English, geography, history and civics, science, hygiene, physical exercise, home economics for girls and shop work for boys were to be compulsory throughout the three-year course:. Junior high schools would provide an essential bridge between elementary and high school. Shop work had a simple rationale - it was to be taught "in order to learn to use simple tools that have enabled man to provide food, clothing and shelter" (Report, 1925, p. 91). The basis for home economics was more prescriptive, intended to teach technical skills with a moral rationale; to provide "systematic and well-directed instruction and practice in those activities which are fundamental to home-making and therefore fundamental for building up and preserving a healthy nation" (Report, 1925, p. 91).

A "healthy nation" as a reason for home economics implies what Wood (1985) has called the underlying eugenicism of educationists such as John Watson and G. Stanley Hall, who exerted strong influences on Putman and Weir. An underlying aim of progressive education was to improve the lower classes and/or those of inferior morals. Home economics was not simply the study of daily life or real objects. It had a mission. The Report quoted from the presentation by the Victoria Local Council of Women to the survey commission:

We believe that the home is the natural and rightful domain of woman, and therefore that home economics, the

science of the home, is pre-eminently the proper and logical study for womankind....We believe that in the different branches of this subject there is ample scope for the varying abilities of the most brilliant minds of the sex....Many social problems [will be solved] when the dignity of home-making is adequately recognized....Let us not forget that upon the physical stamina, the mental and moral fibre of the mothers-to-be, depends the character of the...very life of tomorrow. (Report, 1925, p. 339)

The commissioners outlined two main objections that ratepayers had about manual training and home economics. One objection was that the subjects were too materialistic and practical; education should instead be wholly idealistic and cultural. The second objection was that manual training and home economics were worthless because they were not taught in a practical manner. The commissioners attempted consensus by claiming both cultural and practical values in home economics and manual training. "All children receive cultural values from so-called vocational studies which could not be given them by any other means" (Report, 1925, p. 337). In an anthropological sense, home economics and manual training were transmitting the values of the culture.

According to the Report, home economics had not fulfilled the expectation that it would be a legitimate

academic subject with a practical focus. Home economics teachers were chided for frightening away school boards by demanding expensive kitchen outfitting instead of demonstrating the worth of their subject. Poor academic and professional training had led to waste of time and materials. The commissioners commented on the time spent scribbling notes in cooking, sewing or textiles, when "a gramophone could do the work done by the teacher, and a rotary duplicator with one operator that done by the twenty girls" (Report, 1925, p. 98). Another more serious defect was the almost complete separation of home economics and manual training from other departments in the schools. Until the subjects were fully incorporated into the schools, Putman and Weir predicted they would remain as they were, "a kind of excrescence in the school proper" (Report, 1925, p. 99). The special diploma for handwork given to students who completed courses in manual training and home economics was another area of concern. Although the subjects were not officially part of the school curriculum, the commissioners noted that the handwork diplomas were withheld from pupils who did not secure high school entrance. The less-able were penalized twice, in the commissioners' view.

The question of home economics in the high school and its claim to be credited toward university matriculation presented the commissioners with a problem. Because the

survey commission had "nothing to do with setting university requirements", to comment on matriculation credit seemed to be a "gratuitous impertinence" (Report, 1925, p. 164). The recommendation was carefully phrased. Every middle school and high school in British Columbia ought to provide home economics courses where there were sufficient numbers and qualified teachers. However, to justify a subject in terms of university credits was unsound. The test for subjects was internal: every subject ought to find its justification in itself, through the way in which it met the "actual life needs, present and prospective" of the students (Report, 1925, p. 165). The commissioners conceded that courses such as the three-year home economics program at King Edward High School had high cultural and practical value, but girls enrolled in it did not receive instruction in geometry. Because all universities in Canada required geometry for entrance, the commissioners saw no means of changing the status quo. They recommended that home economics be accepted as equivalent to two sciences but not to geometry. Although home economics was touted as an essential fact of every girl's education, it was not equal to certain academic subjects.

The Report recommended that the classroom teachers should instruct the students in manual arts until grade five. At this point the students would be developmentally ready for

real things and should be taught by specialists. The relationship between cultural and practical values as expressed in practical education was axiomatic in the recommendations regarding home economics. "All education is cultural and all education is vocational" proclaimed the commissioners, further stating:

The modern conception of education as complete living as well as a preparation for making a "worthwhile life" is inconsistent with any attempt rigidly to separate vocational and academic training....Home economics for girls is not on the school programme...to train them to be housemaids or cooks or seamstresses or laundresses but because while doing these things in some degree, it also gives the girl a sane attitude toward life by requiring her to solve life problems and deal with real projects. If she does not get from this work cultural values greater than she would have received from spending the same time on a study of Latin or Greek or higher mathematics then the plea for this subject as a school activity breaks down completely because in a final analysis the value of all elementary and high school training must be measured by its cultural value (Report, 1925, p. 337).

The Report was vague about the definition of cultural values, loosely defining them as the links between culture

and skill. A workman could produce an item of high quality "only because he [sic] has a high degree of intelligence and a fine appreciation of beauty" (Report, 1925, p. 337). In some ways the School Survey harkened back to J.W. Robertson's original notion of the whole child, head, hand and heart going to school. The integration of "headedness" and "handedness" was fundamental to progressive education. Any division between the two was due to the "degree of emphasis placed now on one aim and now on another" (Report, 1925, p. 337), rather than genuine distinctions. Potentially, home economics could provide the ultimate integrating factor between home and school, private and public.

The matter of having a woman supervisor of provincial home economics was addressed by the commissioners. The Report recommended the appointment of a "thoroughly competent woman" to organize and direct home economics (p. 338). The phrase had already been used by John Kyle (ARPS, 1918-1919) and the Home Economics Section of the British Columbia Teachers Federation in their submission to the School Survey ("Home economics section", 1924). The new director would have to be university-trained with a good understanding of progressive principles of education. She would have "tact in dealing with the public, executive ability, training for leadership, and above all good judgment and a genius for practising economy" (p. 338). Translated into action, the

new director would have to "insist on a wise expenditure of money, allow no waste of either pupils' time or material, and co-ordinate lessons in home economics with other school activities on the one hand and with the home life of the pupils on the other" (Report, p. 339).

Reactions to the Putman-Weir Report

The School, official organ of the Ontario Teachers' Association had several enthusiastic references to the B.C. School Survey in the first few months after it was presented to the Department of Education. One writer tabulated four "important findings": recommendations for a junior high section (sometimes referred to as 6-3-3) and a more elastic high school curriculum, equalizing of the tax burden, increased training of teachers through extended practice teaching and the development of an intensive testing programme (Wingfield, 1925). The School Survey was described as a showcase for current tendencies in educational theory as they were applied by "men of wide practical experience". "There is not a dull page in the volume" proclaimed the editor of The School ("Editorial Notes", 1925, p. 320).

Subsequent observers of education in British Columbia have felt a fascination with the Putman-Weir Report and written about it in several different contexts. Sutherland (1986) saw the main effect of the Report as being

administrative reform rather than advancement in educational thought. In spite of the claims of the commissioners that "formalism" was anathema to progressive education, Sutherland presented a strong case to support his contention that most school classes were conducted formally and passively in British Columbia well into the 1950's. The project method which the Report proposed as an alternative to formal discipline was never adequately explained or promoted. Music, art, industrial education and home economics were somewhat livelier than other classes because students "often brought their competence to the classroom rather than learning it there" (Sutherland, 1986, p. 187). Home economics in particular stayed relevant because of its practical dimension, the way in which its content changed with changing times, and the fact that it quickly grew into a professional field, taught by university-trained women (Sutherland, 1976, p. 190).

Dunn (1979) interpreted the effect of the Putman-Weir Report as primarily vocational in the sense of de-emphasizing work skills in favour of work disciplines and citizenship training. The commissioners, according to Dunn, defined an efficient education system as "one with comprehensive high schools open to the masses, so children could maximize their contributions as citizens" (Dunn, 1979, p. 246). To this end the Report promoted vocational training which would "help

students accept their places in the new industrial society, thus enhancing social efficiency" (p. 253). However, the result was a "continuing ambiguity in the place of vocational education in public schools" because the training received would often be "only marginally related to the occupational promises offered by reformers" (p. 253). Vocational courses for girls sought to prepare girls for their place in the work world, but more importantly, the home.

Other writers have critiqued the Putman-Weir Report for its extremely broad terms (Mann, 1978) and heavily laden cynicism, sarcasm and negativity (Stortz, 1988). Wood (1982, 1985) claims that 'education' became increasingly equated with 'schooling' as a result of the progressive education philosophy expressed in the Report. The school became known as the best and in many cases the only place for children to understand the social and economic life about them. Experiential knowledge was central to progressive education but growth and development were to be organized socially. Wood contends that after the Putman-Weir Report, education was not regarded as a reciprocal, complex relationship between the child and his or her environment. Rather, the motives of education were social, bent upon reducing individual differences. The aims of schooling were to make everyone as 'normal' as possible. As Wood so clearly points out, Putman and Weir recentred the education of British

Columbia in their own progressive ideology. The Putman-Weir Report was the "sophisticated blueprint" intended to bring the benefits of the practical education movement to all Canadian children (Sutherland, 1976, p. 223). Sutherland cautions against using hindsight to identify the naivete of the theory behind practical education:

If we can see and criticize the generally ramshackle quality of the ad hoc bits and pieces Canadians called the 'new' education, then our quarrel surely is less with those who put it together than with [those] who actually implemented it [and] should have discerned its weaknesses and turned to something better. (Sutherland, 1976, p. 224)

The main legacy of the Putman-Weir Report was its promotion of practical education as legitimate academic subjects. In so doing it underscored the ambivalent state of home economics education. Cultural and vocational values would be integrated in practical education; the true realist, after all, would apply his [sic] culture in practical ways. Therefore technical skills had to be upgraded and home economics was singled out as particularly needful in use of time and resources. Ideology regarding the value of handwork differentiated sharply between boys and girls. Girls were expected to receive improved instruction in activities

fundamental to building a healthy nation; boys were expected to learn the use of simple tools. Real projects were essential, but not to the extent that they would provide job-training. A girl would not learn to be a laundress or seamstress but would instead develop a sane attitude to life. Matriculation status was denied to home economics because it did not conform to university requirements across Canada.

Jessie McLenaghan, the "thoroughly competent woman" hired to implement the home economics recommendations, shared considerable background and philosophy with the original proponents of New Education in British Columbia. Her accomplishments were subject to the particular restrictions of progressive education and to political and economic conditions beyond her control. The next chapter details what McLenaghan could and could not do for home economics education in British Columbia.

Endnotes

1. Robin (1972) described the financial condition of the B.C. government inherited by John Oliver and the Liberals in 1916 as "in a shambles" and credited it to the profligacy of Richard McBride and W. Bowser. Ormsby (1971) asserts that financial improvement did not come about until 1922.

2. Vancouver's population multiplied five-fold between 1901 and 1921 (Canada Year Book, 1926). The increase was three times greater through migration than natural increase (Urquhart, 1965, p.22). Of the 117,000 Vancouver residents in 1926, 38,000 were of British birth (Canada Year Book, 1926, p.113). Ninety percent of British Columbia children were attending school in 1921, compared to 61% of Canada as a whole. The infant mortality rate was the lowest in Canada, 56.5 per 1000 births (Canada Year Book, 1926, p. 127) versus Ontario's rate of 91.2 (4). See:

Urquhart, M. (Ed.) (1965). Historical statistics of Canada. Toronto: Macmillan.

3. The press and opposition accused the government of grudgingly assenting to an event which was long overdue. Irene Moody, a prominent Conservative and former Vancouver School Board Chair, alleged that Oliver had treated the selection of the commissioners with contempt. "If John Oliver's first suggestion in regard to the survey, 'to let Mary Ellen [a reference to Mary Ellen Smith] do it' had been carried out" sniffed Moody, "they might just as well have brought up a clerk from a dry goods store in Vancouver to reorganize a farm on the dry belt" ("Conservative meeting", 1924).

Mary Ellen Smith (1861-1933) was elected to the British Columbia legislature as an Independent from Vancouver in 1918, the constituency represented by her late husband Ralph Smith. She was the first woman Cabinet minister in the British Empire (1921). A contemporary described Smith as being "as much at home in the kitchen as on the floor of the legislature. Mrs. Smith is a first-class cook and housekeeper, and it is not her public activities but love of her home that has been the big force in her life" (Western Woman's Weekly, 1918, 1 (30), p. 1). For further information, see:

Conservative meeting. (1924, June 20). Vernon News. p. 3.

Hale, L. (1980). Profiles of prominent British Columbia suffragists and social reformers. In B. Latham & C. Kess (Eds.) In her own right: Selected essays on women's history in British Columbia. Victoria: Camosun College.

4. For more information on J.H. Putman and his idealist rural world view, see his own book Fifty years at school: An educationist looks at life (1938). A particularly well-written account of Putman's life and philosophy is found in:

Wood, B. Anne (1985). Idealism transformed: The making of a progressive educator. Kingston and Montreal: McGill and Queen's University Press.

See also:

Roberts, C.G.D. & Turnell, A. (1937-38). The Canadian who's who. Toronto: Trans-Canada Press.

5. George Weir was remembered more for his attempts to establish universal health insurance than his educational innovations. The Canadian Who's Who stated that Weir had "the ability to marshal public opinion in favour of social betterment projects which he has at heart" (Roberts & Turnell, 1938-39). Mann's (1978) claim was that Weir had a strong antipathy toward eastern Canada and felt it was the role of the West to lead the way for the rest of Canada (p.43). I did not find evidence to support this view. Ormsby (1971) graphically described Weir's oratory skills in the Legislature (pp. 456-457). For further biographical information see:

Roberts, C.G.D. & Turnell, A. (1938-39). The Canadian who's who. Toronto: Trans-Canada Press.

Carter, S.M. (1947-48). Who's who in British Columbia. Vancouver: Author.

Victoria Daily Colonist (1949, December 6). Obituary for George Moir Weir.

6. Of the research team, Peter Sandiford (1882-1941) was perhaps the most influential. He received his training at the University of Manchester and Columbia University, thus epitomizing the juncture of American and English thoughts about progressive education in Canada. From the University of Toronto, Sandiford wrote several landmark texts on educational psychology which were used widely in teacher-training institutions. See:

Wallace, W.S. (1978). The Macmillan dictionary of Canadian biography (4th ed.) Toronto: Macmillan.

7. Sections of Weir's Survey of nursing education (1932) are identical to the Report, including the same cliches about "Topsy" and "performin' powneys".

8. W.H. Kilpatrick (1918) defined the project method as "wholehearted purposeful activity proceeding in a social environment". He originated the concept from his readings of Pestalozzi and his early school teaching experience. Mossman (1921) predicted that the project method would fail if the child's part was limited only to the execution of projects rather than including their planning. As readers of the following sources will discover, the projects often became ends in themselves and the project method did not fulfil its original, if undefined integrative aim.

Chipman, D. (1977). Young Kilpatrick and the progressive idea. History of Education Quarterly, 17 (Winter), 407-415.

Dickie, D. (1940). The Enterprise in Theory and Practice. Toronto: Gage.

Kilpatrick, W.H. (1918). The project method. Teachers College Record, 19 (4), 319-335.

Mossman, L. (1921). The project method in the industrial and household arts. Teachers College Record, 22 (4), 322-328.

Tomkins, G. (1986). A common countenance: Stability and change in the Canadian curriculum. Scarborough, ON: Prentice-Hall. pp. 190-196.

CHAPTER IV HOME ECONOMICS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA 1926-1939

Jessie McLenaghan was forty-three years old, and at the peak of her career when she was appointed first Director of Home Economics for the British Columbia Department of Education. Her connections were impeccable. Her cousin the Honourable Arthur Meighen, had entered his second short term as Conservative Prime Minister of Canada (Mitchell, 1989). Her only brother James Osborne McLenaghan was well on his way to becoming Attorney-General of Manitoba (Pioneers and Prominent People of Manitoba, 1925). McLenaghan, as the "thoroughly competent woman" specified by the Putman-Weir Report (1925, p. 338) faced a tough job of putting home economics "on track". The job description from the outset was contradictory; McLenaghan was expected to make required changes, but not create controversy or extra expense. The tasks awaiting her were reconciling and unifying the provincial home economics public school curriculum, publicizing the program, initiating new ideas, and ensuring that home economics became an integral part of the curriculum.

Jessie McLenaghan's accomplishments as Director of Home Economics can be roughly divided into three parts which correspond to political and economic events in British Columbia. From 1926 to 1929 the program expanded with confidence as McLenaghan set about implementing the changes

recommended by the Putman-Weir Report within her mandate. From 1929 to 1933, the tone changed to one of "contraction and perplexity" when the effects of the Great Depression rebounded on education (VBST Annual Report, 1933, p. 26). The third era, 1934 to 1939, constituted the "Golden Age" of practical arts, when many of the progressive ideals of the Putman-Weir School Survey came to fruition. Although Jessie McLenaghan was Director of the Home Economics Branch until 1946, the Second World War diverted attention from any significant accomplishments other than the founding of the Canadian Home Economics Association in 1939.

Jessie McLenaghan

Jessie Louise McLenaghan (1883-1968) was third-born in a family of seven children (six girls and one boy) of John and Elspeth (McIlquham) McLenaghan of Balderson Corners, Lanark County, Ontario. At the age of nineteen Jessie was teaching in a one-room school close to the family farm at Perth, Ontario (McLanaghan, 1903-1906). She did not receive formal teacher training until the McLanaghan family moved to Manitoba in 1904 and she and her sister Jen went to Winnipeg Normal School for an eighteen-week course. In her diary, Jessie recorded taking manual training and making a "little box" at Normal School, but unlike her sister, she did not study domestic science (McLanaghan, 1903-1906). McLanaghan's

diary reveals her as an enthusiastic, energetic person who loved to tease, but who was at the same time capable of whipping a "nag that was too slow" or a pupil who "fibbed" (McLenaghan, 1903-1906). It is not clear when McLenaghan developed an interest in home economics, but certainly she had a lifelong mission to "improve people's lot" (Gibbon, 1989). Those who knew her recall her as "very human" (Mitchell, 1989), the kind of person who "always had three kinds of cookies made by herself on hand" (Gibbon, 1989). Jessie was seen as an "idealist, governed by conviction" who thoroughly believed in home economics. To ensure change "all you had to do was call attention to a point and the person would correct it" (Gibbon, 1989).

Jessie McLenaghan spent a few years teaching grade school in southern Manitoba and Saskatchewan. In 1917 she attended the Lillian Massey-Treble School of Domestic Science in Toronto and was head of the class (Laird, 1924). This study was not sufficient for a degree in Household Science, but did introduce McLenaghan to noted home economists such as Annie Laird, associate professor and one of the founding members of the American Dietetic Association.

Upon return to Saskatchewan, McLenaghan worked as Assistant Supervisor for the Saskatoon Normal School at the same time that George Weir was Principal. With two or three other home economics supervisors, Jessie worked on a three-

week itinerant basis, teaching domestic science in the schools during the day and giving short courses for adults in the evening. Fannie Twiss, the Home Economics Director, was a graduate of Macdonald Institute and Teachers College, Columbia University who believed in grass roots promotion of home economics.¹ Twiss saw the role of household science as "active and worthy membership in the home and the community" (Saskatchewan Department of Education Annual Report, 1920, p. 84). She anticipated a shift in emphasis from subject matter to method of presentation. "Teachers are coming to think that it is not enough that pupils can make various dishes...and name the food principles....The [important] questions are: Do the pupils apply in their own lives the knowledge gained?" (Saskatchewan Department of Education Annual Report, 1921, p. 77). Just as Elizabeth Berry received training in political stratagems from Mary Urie Watson, so Twiss introduced McLenaghan to the political aspects of home economics. She may have also inspired McLenaghan to leave the Saskatoon Normal School in 1924 for degree training at Teachers College, Columbia University.

Jessie McLenaghan was one of many Canadian educators who went to the United States for training (Patterson, 1970). Columbia had a particular lure for home economics teachers. Its Faculty of Practical Arts had been set up for the

specific task of training teachers of home economics and allied subjects.²

Some of the prevailing philosophy at Teachers College was expressed in a textbook Teaching Home Economics (1919) written by several home economics faculty members; Anna Cooley, Cora Winchell, Wilhelmina Spohr and Josephine Marshall. The authors declared that "only through a closely woven course involving both theory and practice can the subject matter ...have any real value to the students" (Cooley, Winchell, Spohr, and Marshall, 1919, p. vii). Home economics was promoted as an essential part of boys' education as well as girls': "Women and men together make the homes of our land, and both should understand the problems of home-making" (Cooley et al., 1919, p. 50). The authors suggested that women would have two careers, one within the home and one in a chosen occupation. Therefore they must be well-prepared for both.

In earlier articles written for the Teachers College Record, Cooley et al. provided a rationale for teaching home economics in a "true to life" fashion, responsive to individual student needs. The subject, in the authors' eyes, should "reflect life as it is and as it may be when raised to the highest plane to which it may attain... in homes...or industry" (Cooley et al., 1918a, p. 127). It was argued that modern methods of teaching dictated the end of the time when

the teacher could offer a "pouring in method of instruction". The alternative was the problem method, with subject matter organized psychologically so that the pupil had a definite problem to be solved (Cooley et al., 1918a, p. 129). The authors advocated shortcuts whenever possible to maintain students' motivation:

To arrange the work on the basis of the practice sewing piece...or on the study of each food principle before...combination in a meal is to exalt the technical aim and deaden the natural interest in an otherwise absorbing problem. (Cooley et al., 1918b, p. 379)

Home economics was viewed as a vehicle for fulfilling the progressive education tenet that "modern education should approximate real life" (Cooley et al., 1918a, p. 124). "The homes must be made the centres of life and good influences which will help to develop men and women with a right attitude towards the problems of life" (Cooley et al., 1919, p. 58). To this end, the following aims for home economics were promoted:

(1) to teach the girl the principles of healthful living, (2) to strengthen in the girl a sane attitude toward the relation of the modern home to economic, social scientific, aesthetic, and spiritual problems through an appreciation of woman's work in the home and outside the home as producer and consumer, (3) to train

the girl to do as well as to know why. [emphasis in original] (Cooley et al., 1918a, p. 120)

These idealistic visions of home economics education could be interpreted ambiguously. The home was seen as the moral centre of life, and home economics would teach girls how to fulfil their places as worthy home members. Boys' roles were less clear; they should "appreciate" homemaking information. The welding together of cultural and practical values created a difficult situation of combining high technical standards with moral standards. The projects done by the students should not only be worthy of completion (that is, of high quality) but be done with the 'right' attitude, presumably pointed toward worthy home membership. The term "sane" applied to home economics predated the use of the term in the Putman-Weir Report (1925) to indicate the sensible frame of mind that a girl should have to solve "real problems". The home economics faculty at Teachers College foresaw some problems if home economics did not focus beyond the home. Home economics should "free household tasks from drudgery and women from the harassment of a round of petty duties that cannot fully engage their time and intellect" (Cooley et al., 1919, p. 65).

When the position of Director of Home Economics for British Columbia was created in 1926, Jessie McLenaghan had

been employed for one year at the New York State Teachers' College at Albany ("News from the Field", 1926). She had graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Practical Arts and a teaching diploma from Columbia University in 1925. Her former colleague, George Weir quite possibly recommended Jessie for the position. At any rate, her parents had already retired to Vancouver and Jessie, always close to her family, left what was likely an enriching environment in New York for the "politics of muddle" in British Columbia (Robin, 1972).

1926-1929 "Making haste slowly"

Jessie McLenaghan's self-proclaimed motto for her first year as Director was "Make haste slowly" (ARPS, 1926-27, p. M64). Accomplishments of that first year included a complete curriculum revision to include junior high school classes and the writing and publishing of a recipe manual under the guise of including "more than mere technical processes" in all areas of home economics. Content areas were tackled first. McLenaghan observed that hand-sewing was being overdone at the grade six level with resulting "weariness and general lack of interest on the part of the child". Her answer was to introduce machine-sewing on an experimental basis to convince "those in doubt" (ARPS, 1926-27, p. M65). The results, McLenaghan reported, were decided increases in

interest, practical value and the number of problem-solving situations that could be developed.

Jessie McLenaghan advocated the psychological approach to food work over the logical approach.³ In practice, this meant that each food product should be prepared because of its relation to a definite meal, rather than by the nutrients it contained. McLenaghan urged teachers to "stimulate inquiry and encourage investigation" by experimenting in food study (ARPS, 1926-27, p. M65). The newly-written recipe manual would enable teachers and pupils to save time previously spent copying recipes; it would also stimulate practice in the "natural laboratory" of the home. McLenaghan anticipated the day when home economics pupils would be able to get their information from the printed page "as is done by students of other academic subjects" (ARPS, 1926-27, p. M64). McLenaghan set out her intentions clearly in the foreword to the recipe manual: "It is most advisable that we prove that home economics is not an 'unprepared subject'" (Department of Education Recipe Manual, 1927, p. i). Other instances of the push to prove the academic worth of home economics were the institution of grade eight departmental examinations in foods and nutrition and inclusion of home economics marks on the monthly report cards (ARPS, 1928-29, p. R54). McLenaghan asked teachers to stress food principles so that students would gain "an intelligent understanding of the reasons

underlying various procedures, proving that Cookery is not merely a 'rule of thumb'" (McLenaghan, 1939a). In other words, home economics would replace past intuitive forms of learning about household management, such as that type of learning passed on from mother to daughter.

McLenaghan set in motion the 1927 curriculum revision of home economics with the intent to assure uniformity across the province. An equally compelling reason was the need to provide curriculum for the newly-introduced junior high schools. Through enriched curricula and courses of study in junior high schools, pupils would discover their interests, aptitudes and abilities, have their individual differences recognized, and receive "that common background of ideas and experience necessary for the attainment of social solidarity" (British Columbia Department of Education Programme of Studies for the Junior High Schools [Programme of Studies], 1927, p. 5).

Practical arts, including both industrial arts and home economics, appeared as constants on the subject list. Home economics focused on developing right attitudes to home and family life. It appeared to involve a moral injunction for girls to learn the virtues of worthy home membership through gradually increasing home responsibilities. Activities for worthy home membership included speaking pleasantly to others, avoiding fault-finding, obeying one's parents,

considering others, and cheerfully and faithfully performing those tasks which would lead to personal advancement (Programme of Studies, 1927, p. 55). Boys taking industrial arts were not similarly required to learn about manners, but were encouraged instead to develop in "socially useful directions their innate tendencies to manipulate materials" (p. 44). Thus, the differing values attributed to home economics and manual training in the Putman-Weir Report (1925) were expressed in the curriculum revision. A child care unit was included in grade seven to give a "background which will prove useful to the girls as future mothers" (p. 57). The curriculum was organized around home problems such as "What should I know about foods so that I may be able to select, prepare and serve breakfasts suitable for my family?" (p. 52).

By far the most revolutionary change was in the focus on group rather than individual work. In 1927 the first "unit kitchens", equipped for four students, replaced the "hollow squares" where each student had her own equipment. The change necessitated special inservice instruction to teachers by Charlotte Black of the Kitsilano Junior High School ("Home economics section", 1928). Teachers were encouraged to have the girls work in "family units" in real situations and serve family-size recipes (ARPS, 1927-28, p. V57). The underlying assumption was the necessity for home economics to raise the

standards of home experience. Girls would learn cultural values, in the 1927 curriculum revision, through vocational skills, using 'vocation' in a more moral sense than for boys in industrial arts.

The 1927 high school curriculum revision was divided into special home economics and general home economics. Special home economics was a three-year program, which in 1929 became accepted by the University of British Columbia for partial matriculation credit (Irvine, 1975a). The classes were likely to be taught with simple equipment: "Only one stove in a room necessitated teacher-demonstration to the class followed by only one or two girls doing the actual cooking" (Irvine, 1975a). The classes were supposed to emulate real-life as much as possible. Methods of darning and patching, for example were to be done on real garments, not samples.

With the 1927 revision, the purpose of home economics directly mirrored progressive education ideals. Wood (1985) observed that the motives of education after the Putman-Weir Report were social, the school being considered the best and often the only place for children to learn about society. Home economics classes played their part in socializing students and replicating the "home ideal" in the school setting. Both junior and high school curricula had strong elements of consumer education: students were to compare

home-made to ready-made products in clothing and foods marketing, home fuels were to be compared and attention was to be paid to the relative cost of seasonable produce (Programme of Studies, 1927, p. 53). Time-and-motion studies were recommended and Christine Frederick's book Household Engineering was one of many references.

While Jessie McLenaghan worked provincially to boost the image of home economics, Mildred Cunningham contributed her share as Elizabeth Berry's successor in the Vancouver School District. Before McLenaghan's appointment, Vancouver home economics teachers had begun to adapt their programs according to either the recommendations of the Report or progressive education thought. In 1925 Vancouver teachers had piloted an industrial arts course based on Mossman (1921) which integrated art, manual training and home economics. In the course, 'problems' in food, clothing, shelter, utensils, records and tools were selected in relation to the history and geography studied in particular grades. Cunningham reported a grade four Japanese project which had included a tour of a Japanese store and demonstrations by Japanese women on silk-making processes, culminating in the students making a silk item for a Christmas present. Such projects would, in Cunningham's opinion, result in social consciousness leading to good citizenship, vocational interest and a "richer

cultural background making for more effective homemaking" (VBST Annual Report, 1926, p.75).

Efficiency in home economics classes was stressed after the stinging indictment of the Putman-Weir Report. Time use was improved through schemes such as six students washing dishes instead of twenty-four, increase in quantities to family-size recipes, and the use of mimeographed recipes. Upgrading sewing standards presented a special problem. Elementary classroom teachers taught the subject under the watchful eye of a sewing supervisor but they frequently had no training. Meetings to train these teachers were instituted.

Other standards required correction as well. After shaping the public school curriculum, Jessie McLenaghan began work on the improvement of teacher qualifications. She had singled out the training of home economics teachers as a problem of "considerable contrast" in her first report (ARPS, 1926-27, p. M65). The Victoria Normal School had a home economics specialist; no such position existed in Vancouver. A concurrent effort by the Parent-Teacher Federation of British Columbia and the Local Councils of Women to raise \$80,000 towards the establishment of a Chair of Home Economics at the University of British Columbia meant that there was considerable interest in home economics education.

Any improvement in teacher qualifications would increase the prestige of home economics in Jessie McLenaghan's eyes; the hiring of fourteen new instructors with bachelor's degrees out of seventeen in 1927 "spelled success" (ARPS, 1926-27, p. M65). Concerns about teacher training were frequently expressed by home economics teachers in the field who were well aware of the commonly held idea that "any woman who was a good cook and seamstress could teach home economics" (Murphy, 1989). The Home Economics Section of the British Columbia Teachers Federation requested at one point that all home economics vacancies be advertised in "the press of centers which provide for training of home economics teachers" before an unqualified person was hired ("Convention sectional reports", 1922, p. 47).

With the entry of home economics into junior and senior high schools, teachers were expected to have more training. By 1929 departmental regulations demanded that all high school teachers hold a bachelor's degree (ARPS, 1928-29, p. R52). Jessie McLenaghan was elated with the acceptance of home economics by the University of British Columbia as a matriculation credit in June of 1929, writing that "this privilege has done more than any other one factor to raise home economics above the position of the Cinderella of the High School curriculum" (ARPS, 1928-29, p. R52). It was a partial victory. Home economics counted for only half of a

regular subject and could not be applied to competition for the Governor-General's Medal. By 1934, McLenaghan achieved her aim of full matriculation credit for home economics through deft use of statistics to prove to the Dean of Arts that students presenting home economics credits had obtained even higher scores in high school mathematics (McLenaghan, 1956, p. 10). The problem of unqualified teachers was temporarily resolved with the establishment of the Chair of Home Economics at the University of British Columbia in 1929. McLenaghan stated that by 1934 the method of hiring out-of-province teachers would "no longer be necessary" (ARPS, 1928-29, p. R52). As has been thoroughly recounted by Stewart (1990), the Home Economics Chair was rescinded in 1931. McLenaghan viewed the cancellation as a postponement (ARPS, 1931-32, p. L35), attributable to the onset of the Depression (McLenaghan, 1939a). With characteristic optimism, she arranged for interest from the fund-raising efforts to be distributed as bursaries to assist local students to complete their training at other universities (ARPS, 1931-32, P. L35).

The indictment of the Putman-Weir Report (1925) regarding the uneven standards of home economics resulted in inspection of all home economics centres by McLenaghan. At one point she also marked all grade twelve foods, clothing and applied art projects (Murphy, 1989). When "Miss

McLenaghan" came to inspect you, the world almost seemed to stop.

She'd be into the room before class started in the morning and she was there ALL day and you were there ALL day and you were there after school, talking and going through [the coursework]. She would not ever upset a pupil in class. She might be very critical to the teacher and the teacher not be able to take it, but that would be done after [class]. She expected to find in your classroom examples of what you had taught through your students...not you teaching [how to clean bake boards] but doing it through your lesson (Murphy, 1989).

The number of centres to inspect increased from 57 in 1926-27 to 83 in 1929-30. Despite this increase, enrolment in the three years had increased by only 400 pupils (from 11,429 to 11,888). The real shift came in the grade level; in 1927, 19% of all home economics pupils were in high school. Three years later junior and high school pupils accounted for 44% of all home economics enrolment (ARPS, 1926-27; ARPS, 1929-30). The reason was the inclusion of grades seven and eight in junior high schools.

Organizational changes in the entire school system thus distorted the apparent expansion of the home economics program. McLenaghan did not acknowledge changes of this type in her reports. She preferred to attribute the increase in

numbers of centres to the improved program and qualifications. For example the number of centres had doubled by 1937-38, but only 10% more pupils were actually enrolled in home economics than in 1926-27 (from 11,429 pupils in 57 centres in 1926-27 to 12,672 in 106 centres in 1937-38). Still, Mabel Allen, Supervisor of Home Economics for the Vancouver School Board claimed that every girl who attended school in British Columbia took at least two years of home economics (Allen, 1936, p. 54).

1929-1933 "From expansion to contraction"

A provincial election in 1928 brought the Conservative government of Simon Fraser Tolmie to power "under the guise of efficient business-like government" (Robin, 1972, p. 235). In 1929 the per capita income in British Columbia was the highest in Canada (Robin, 1972) but that changed very quickly. Tolmie's government presided over very dark days, dogged by the crash of '29, railway problems, land scandals and a massive deficit.

The effects of the Depression upon education were not immediately obvious. In her 1930-31 annual report, Jessie McLenaghan claimed that home economics had survived the test; no School Board had dispensed with a home economics program and therefore "we have outlived the stage when home economics as a school subject might be called a 'frill'" (ARPS, 1930-

31, p. L40). Progress was made between 1930 and 1933 in McLenaghan's mission to prove that home economics was a 'prepared subject'. High school students were able to take home economics by correspondence starting in 1930, which McLenaghan thought was a "first" in Canada (McLenaghan, 1939a). Twenty-two home economics teachers enrolled for the 1932 summer school course in clothing, almost 25% of the total employed number (ARPS, 1931-32, p. L28).

The positive outlook diminished in 1932 when Joshua Hinchcliffe, the Minister of Education attempted to give city and municipal councils the power to prohibit school boards from continuing or establishing courses in manual training, domestic science and other subjects generally considered 'fads and frills' (Wilson & Jones, 1980). Hinchcliffe was temporarily stalled in his attempt, but home economics centres soon started to close as a result of economic distress. Jessie McLenaghan acknowledged the way in which the public through petitions had "expressed its regret and its appreciation of the work done" when centres had been shut down (ARPS, 1931-32, p. L35). One in eight positions were lost (from 81 in 1931-32 to 72 in 1934-35).

1933-36 "Sentinels of the New Order"

Although the worst parts of the Depression were probably still to come, teachers and educationists had reason for hope

in 1933. The 1933 election brought the Liberal government of Thomas Dufferin Pattullo to power and the architect of New Education in British Columbia, George Weir, to the position of Minister of Education. Weir's first message to the teachers of British Columbia after his November 15, 1933 appointment as Minister of Education greeted them as "sentinels of the new Social Order and guardians of the interests of Young Canada" (Weir, 1933, p. 1). He told the teachers, that while their economic condition was gloomy enough, it was far from hopeless. The reaction to Weir was understandably positive. He was hailed as the man "destined to be the most outstanding Minister of Education in the history of British Columbia" ("British Columbia", 1934a, p. 457). Harry Charlesworth, secretary of the BCTF, saw the vision of a "square deal for education" in Weir's appointment ("Editorial", 1933, p. 3).

Weir had an agenda of social reform and educational reconstruction in mind. To his previously strongly held convictions about the worth of progressive education could be added the concept of health. It came from the survey of nursing education in Canada conducted by Weir between 1929 and 1931. Weir supported health as the most important of the Seven Cardinal Objectives since it "conditions the attainment of the other objectives" (Weir, 1932, p. 42).

The schedule of reform included the restructuring of educational finance and the administration of education for leisure ("British Columbia", 1934b, p. 640). Weir predicted that education over the next ten years would become "more practical and realistic without the lessening of its cultural value" ("British Columbia", 1934c, p. 824). Thus was introduced a major concept of the School Survey; education which integrated cultural and practical values. Weir commissioned a report which reassessed the educational system in British Columbia. H.B. King, as technical advisor, pronounced the existing school system as inadequate with no philosophy or applied science of education, a "terribly maladjusted" curriculum based on university requirements rather than individual demands, and inequality of opportunity. "At present neither our curriculum nor our teaching is focused on the needs of the learner...Half of the school population could benefit to a much greater degree than present from a secondary education" (King, cited in Logie, 1936, p. 25).

An amendment to the Public School Act in 1936 made home economics compulsory in the British Columbia public school system.⁴ This event marked a major step toward achieving one of the major tenets of progressive education, broadening options in schooling. Jessie McLenaghan interpreted the achievement of compulsory home economics to mean equal status

with academic subjects: "No longer does the retention of this department depend upon the attitude of the community" (ARPS, 1935-36, p. H80). McLenaghan attributed the achievement to the hard work of her teachers, but there were other reasons. The support of H.N. MacCorkindale, Superintendent of the Vancouver Schools, had contributed to compulsory home economics. MacCorkindale had protected home economics and manual training in 1933 when the Vancouver School District was facing immense problems of finance and accommodation. Instead of closing centres in these subjects, he worked out a system whereby they were incorporated into regular classes. "Manual arts" for grades 1-6 was put in the hands of classroom teachers and "practical arts" was taught to grades 7, 8 and 9 by the manual training and home economics teachers who had previously worked in the elementary schools. At the same time, foods room facilities were expanded to 32 pupils from 24. The rearrangement was accompanied by inservice to two hundred elementary school teachers, chosen, MacCorkindale reported, on the basis of their aptitudes for manual arts. The new manual arts course had proven so successful that the Department of Education had asked for the course of study so that it could be authorized for the entire province (VBST Annual Report, 1933, p. 26).

McLanaghan referred to the change in attitude of educators toward home economics as "coming up out of the

basement". Her intended allusion was to the usual basement location of the home economics laboratories "which typified the prestige of the subject" (McLenaghan, 1956, p. 11). McLenaghan quoted a "Vancouver high school principal" as saying that "home economics is in the secondary school - all in" (McLenaghan, 1941, p. 746). The quotation came from an article by J. Roy Sanderson, a Vancouver high school principal and future member of the University Senate who lauded home economics: "If 'mere man' had only a little knowledge of what...home-making could do for him, not only through his stomach, but through a proper home environment, he would...demand...home economics for those who are at the fountainhead of our society" (Sanderson, 1936, p. 176). At the same time Sanderson declared that "[home economics] means just one among many subjects and is treated just as, and no differently from, any other subject" (p.177).

Home economics may have been "in - all in the school system" but not without qualifications. Equal status for home economics had a price attached to it. The former half-days for home economics gave way to forty or fifty minute periods and the opportunity to teach children below grade seven was lost. The politics of legitimation required sacrifice and compromise. Home economics received ambivalent treatment in the school system. Its status was equal and unique at the same time.

The Curriculum Revision of 1936-1937

The 1936-37 curriculum revision in British Columbia was necessitated by "more recent contributions of the Science of Education" (ARPS, 1935-36, p. H26), apparently not reflected in the curriculum revisions of 1927, 1932 and 1933. The B.C. Teacher wryly commented that "there is no place between the Pacific and the Atlantic where a man could throw a stone without its hitting someone engaged in rewriting a programme of studies" ("New Programme", 1936, p. 1). "Character" was the main objective of general education, achieved through "significant experiences in education" (British Columbia Department of Education Programme of Studies for the Junior High School [Programme of Studies], 1936, p. 8). The role of the school was to enrich the lives of its pupils with the direct result being an "improved society" (p. 15).

Practical arts, defined as including home economics and industrial arts, was a constant for grades seven and eight and a variable for grade nine. A substantial part of the curriculum document was devoted to home economics; Bulletin III had 248 pages for home economics versus 143 for industrial arts and 163 for the commercial section. A bulletin for parents included a complete section on "Character Education" which outlined how the school and specific subjects would contribute to that end.

Significantly, in light of progressive education ideology, the role of the home in education was given one paragraph out of forty pages.

H.B. King, appointed chief curriculum advisor by George Weir, said that "integration" was a major goal for the new curriculum. King commented that integration was relatively easy in the elementary schools, where one teacher handled every subject, but much more difficult at the high school level ("British Columbia", 1937, p. 810). One school inspector commented on the difficulties of integration in the practical arts: "While good work was done in the development of skills, yet it was difficult to secure a satisfactory correlation of practical arts with other subjects" (ARPS, 1937-38, p. J61).

The generic objective for home economics combined a Cardinal Principle of education with cultural and vocational values, endeavouring to "give the student a well-rounded conception of the many responsibilities contributing to worthy home membership....and to gain some knowledge of the profession of home-making" (Programme of Studies, 1936, p. 461). General objectives supplemented the umbrella aim of "worthy home membership". Some of these fit definitely into a skills category: developing an understanding of the relation to health of foods, clothing and home sanitation; developing dexterity in manipulation of tools, machinery and

materials; and learning about the relationship of food values to quality, appearance and cost. Other objectives combined skills and attitudes: developing an appreciation of the value of wise resource planning in order for individuals and families to lead rich and purposeful lives; developing good taste and high standards of quality in the selection of clothing and furnishings. The remaining objectives had moral overtones: to develop the desire and ability to participate in work and social activities within the family; to appreciate the home as a place in which to spend leisure-hours and to gain ability in spending such leisure-hours in ways that would contribute to the improvement of the individual and home.

The Putman-Weir Report (1925) defined cultural values as the links between 'culture' and 'skill', proclaiming that any division between culture and skill was due only to the degree of emphasis, rather than genuine distinctions. Therefore, the Report (1925) suggested that a home economics student should obtain more cultural values from learning how to solve life problems and deal with real projects than from studying Latin, Greek or higher mathematics (p. 337). This was a clear attempt to give the word "practical" a meaning beyond the possession of technical skills. Previously, the academic and liberal arts subjects were used to transmit important

cultural beliefs and traditions. Now it appeared that home economics, a practical subject, would be used to transmit those same ideas through improvement of technical skills. Two sources of inequality were not questioned: first, why home economics was directed only toward females, and second how and where the standards which determined the desired habits of "worthy home membership" were set.

Jessie McLenaghan had spent the ten years between her appointment as Director and the 1936 curriculum revision legitimating home economics as a school subject. Now it appeared that home economics had to be both equal to other subjects and of more cultural value. Several of McLenaghan's colleagues were preoccupied with legitimation and status of home economics. Alice Stevens, a Vernon teacher, wrote that despite home economics being "one of the first branches of learning to be attacked when the period of stress came upon us" it was valuable in the school system because:

The girls of today will become the women of tomorrow. They must be trained for the work they will have to do and to take their places as citizens of our country. Because of its contribution toward both of these objectives, home economics has justified its position as an integral part of our school programme. (Stevens, 1936, p. 87)

Mabel Allen, the Supervisor of Home Economics for the Vancouver School Board, gave four simplified objectives of home economics which, in her view, legitimated it. The first and most important objective was worthy home membership because homemaking no longer entailed "purely manipulative skills". Preparation for a vocation ranked second "because 85% of women marry and become homemakers". Maintaining good standards of health in conjunction with other school departments and "most certainly the home" was third, followed by training in civic, moral and social development "shared with other members of the staff" (Allen, 1936, pp. 54-55). Home economics had a special place in the school, according to Allen, due to the "informal atmosphere of the classes, the segregation of the boys and girls and the type of subject matter" which enabled the teacher to help the pupils form "right ideas of conduct" (p. 55). Home economics could no longer be considered a 'frill' because of its intrinsic worth in bringing to realization "some of our highest concepts of individual and social development" (Allen, 1936, p. 55).

Jessie McLenaghan described the curriculum as "uniform but elastic" because it included minimum requirements for each grade but could be "fit to the needs of the students and the community" (McLenaghan, 1941, p. 748). The importance of home practice was a recurring theme. The home was "the best testing laboratory to develop skill in management and

manipulation and stimulate home interest in school activities" (Programme of Studies, 1936, p. 463). No suggestion was made that the school might learn from home activities. Education in homemaking was a one-way street.

Examination of the actual curriculum document belies the flexibility claimed by McLenaghan. The first project in the grade seven clothing course was the construction of an apron which made up part of the "Cookery Uniform". Exact details about constructing a uniform consisting of apron, headband, and towel were spelled out, down to the exact distance between pins in the fabric layout. Despite the injunction to link home and school practice closely, the grade seven pupil in her cookery uniform on page 45 of the Foods, Nutrition and Home Management Manual (1935) more resembled an antiseptic worker than a homemaker. In fact, the curriculum suggested that a discussion of the care of the uniform be "linked with the attractive appearance of a nurse" (Programme of Studies, 1936, p.474).

Some aspects of the new curriculum blended cultural and vocational values with a moral sense of family responsibilities. High school students who had chosen a purely academic or commercial course were steered toward the new Home Relations course, to enable them to "gain some preparation for what may be their true vocation - homemaking" (Programme of Studies, 1936, p. 199). Whenever the

opportunity arose, admonishments about the 'right' way to do something were employed. In an initial lesson students could "satisfy the urge to cook" by making cocoa, but their attention should be called to "dainty service - i.e. filling the cups three-quarters full and placing the teaspoon correctly" (Programme of Studies, 1936, p. 474).

Home economics included a much wider range of subjects than had the 1927 curriculum revision. Praise was given to the way in which subject matter was related closely as possible to home and living problems with such units as "Social customs and usages", "Co-operation within the family group", "The home -a social centre" and "Appreciation of a satisfying home life" (VBST Annual Report, 1936, p. 34).

Jessie McLenaghan strove to incorporate applied art into the home economics curriculum, declaring that "correlation between the Art Department and the Clothing Department is most essential" (ARPS, 1927-28, p. V56). The first step was an informal art course for home economics teachers taught by Charles Scott of the Vancouver School of Art (ARPS, 1928-29, p. R53). By 1934 a formal summer school in applied art had been instituted to "link drawing and design of elementary and high schools with the handwork of the manual training and home economics" (ARPS, 1933-34, p. N34). In 1935 Grace Melvin of the Vancouver School of Art taught a four-week

summer school in design, colour and stitchery specifically organized for home economics teachers (ARPS, 1934-35, p. S39).

Melvin's interest was instrumental in the writing of an applied art manual for home economics in 1940. The aim of the manual was to "improve the quality of the Applied Art in the Home Economics course, and to make it the organic subject that it can be - having a real cultural value in daily living" (Melvin, 1940, p. i). Grace Melvin was given release time to supervise teachers who implemented applied art and to examine students' practical projects (ARPS, 1940-41, p. D63). The inclusion of a strong art component in home economics reinforced cultural and moral aspects. The teacher was required to carry out the planned sequences in the textbook while "so present[ing] an IDEA [emphasis in original] to her class that students will be willing to accept it as an hypothesis until they themselves have the opportunity of proving it" (Melvin, 1940, p. 5). Advice to the teacher in the third year dress design unit suggested that the successful teacher make a point of fitting into the community in which she taught in order to learn how she might best direct her teaching efforts. If examples of poor taste such as "cheap lace, silver slippers [and] elaborately sophisticated coiffures" were evident, the teacher should counteract them with examples of simplicity in dressing from

her own life (Melvin, 1940, p. 65). Home economics teachers had a moral responsibility to improve everyone's lives according to principles of art.

A Teacher-Proof Curriculum

Curriculum development during McLenaghan's tenure was 'teacher-proof'. Jessie McLenaghan and her committee did not display trust of the home economics teachers in the field. Although McLenaghan claimed that her teachers were much better educated than in the past, she took no chances on their misunderstanding what was expected of them. Two real-life examples substantiate the control which Jessie McLenaghan exerted over her teachers. First, a former Vancouver teacher related the difficulty of conforming to imposed standards in her tale of the "Pemberton potato".

In 1936 I was teaching foods in a 40 minute period. You had three periods to prepare, execute and clean up. Miss McLenaghan has issued an edict. Baked potatoes were not to be cut up but were to be whole. Butter was not to be served with the potato. It doesn't enter into my head that anyone would have a baked potato without butter. Miss McLenaghan has also forgotten that some people really can't eat a whole potato, especially a Pemberton potato. (Gibbon, 1989)

A second case illustrates McLenaghan's beliefs about the role of the curriculum. A young teacher was sent to Prince George in 1939 to introduce home economics and "get them to like it" (Murphy, 1989). On Jessie McLenaghan's inspection visit she discovered that the students had not preshrunk their material as required by the course of studies. The teacher defended her decision:

Miss McLenaghan, I said... When you sent me here you asked me to prove that home ec was a legitimate course and have the students like it and the parents like it. The water in Prince George is so hard you can stand on it. The only soft water is barrel water and there's nothing but bugs floating in it, so I decided that the students' fabric would be so discoloured that they wouldn't enjoy working with it. I have tried to measure the students knowing that they'll grow. By the time they have their dress made and washed the first time it will still fit. She accepted my decision (Murphy, 1989).

Good teachers, or those who could justify their decisions, could diverge from a heavily prescriptive curriculum intended to control weaker teachers. Continual contact was maintained through classroom inspections and newsletters offering up-to-date information on nutrition, child-care and textiles. There were few areas of teaching

which did not elicit a suggestion. In one of McLenaghan's last communications before her retirement, she advised her teachers to write previews, cook in full recipes, have students make only one trip to the supply table and do all of their sewing under the teacher's supervision (McLenaghan, 1945).

"The teacher, not the programme, is the cornerstone of the educational arch", McLenaghan wrote in a 1941 article for The School (p. 750). She echoed a prominent educational psychologist, Peter Sandiford, who had originated the phrase a few years earlier, but who said in addition: "With good teachers, practically any programme can be made to work well; with poor ones, the best course of study in the world will prove a failure" (Sandiford, 1938, p. 476). There was a certain contradiction in having a specific curriculum intended to be prescriptive for all cases and an emphasis on improving teacher training. Would better-educated teachers not require less direction? Tomkins (1986) commented on the irony of the 1937 British Columbia curriculum revision in "promoting ostensible autonomy and self-direction for pupils, while imposing detailed prescription on teachers" (p. 194).

By 1939, Jessie McLenaghan's main accomplishment had been the recognition of home economics as a prepared subject. Home economics was compulsory in cities of the first and second classes⁵ and could be offered by correspondence in

locations where qualified teachers were not available. Although there was not yet a Chair of Home Economics at the University of British Columbia, three home economics graduates from the University of Manitoba had been admitted to the teacher-training course at UBC by order of the University Senate (Mathews, 1939). In 1939 teachers of home economics were finally required to have a year of education before securing a certificate to teach in British Columbia. McLenaghan hailed this development as meaning that home economics teachers finally received equal recognition with academic teachers (ARPS, 1938-39).

The enrolment in home economics had grown from 57 centres and 11,429 pupils in 1926-27 to 120 centres and 13,944 pupils in 1939-40 (ARPS, 1926-27; ARPS, 1939-40). McLenaghan requested an assistant in 1939 because she found it increasingly difficult to maintain her level of inspection (McLenaghan, 1939b). McLenaghan reported that there were twenty-eight centres with teachers needing assistance from Ocean Falls to Prince Rupert, from Vernon to Michel-Natal. Although the qualifications of teachers had dramatically improved in McLenaghan's opinion, she did not consider changing or lessening teacher inspection.

Jessie McLenaghan achieved legitimation for home economics through a textbook, examinations, matriculation credit and equal time in the school day, at the cost of

conforming to an inflexible system. It was ironic that McLenaghan should note the difficulties with large classes and short periods and regret "any move that tended toward making [home economics] theoretical" (ARPS, 1939-40, p. B53). McLenaghan's professors at Teachers College, Columbia University, had warned against deadening natural interest by forcing students to perfect a skill before they made any useful item (Cooley et al., 1918b, p. 379). However 40 or 50 minute periods did not lend themselves to completing practical projects, and the age of "samples" was introduced. Still, home economics was regarded favourably by most students. "While [the pupils] may not always have enjoyed [manual training and home economics], only really nasty teachers could make them actively dislike them" (Sutherland, 1986, p. 189).

The end result of McLenaghan's work was permanent status for home economics in the school system. Attainment of academic status forced it into secondary schools and out of elementary. The resulting ambivalency of a practical subject with an academic focus was accentuated. Home economics was tailored to conform to a rigid structure despite its supposed elasticity. Home economics was expected to be locally responsive but inspections were centralized. Improved teacher training did not lessen the need for continual teacher inspection. The achievement of legitimation meant

loss of individual relevance in the endeavour to make a fundamentally practical subject "academic".

Epilogue

In 1939 Jessie McLenaghan was elected the first president of the Canadian Home Economics Association. Its founding was proof to McLenaghan that "people everywhere are beginning to realize how vitally Home Economics is connected with everyday living" (ARPS, 1940-41, p. D62).

A highlight of Jessie McLenaghan's retirement years was the awarding of an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the University of British Columbia in 1956. In the citation delivered in her honour, mention was made of her "zeal, competency and energy [which] availed greatly to defend Domestic Science during the forlorn Depression Years when it was nearly swept from the Curriculum as a so-called 'frill'....Toward all that was new and untried...she came with...a happy blend of caution and open-mindedness" (McKenzie, 1956). After McLenaghan's death on December 19, 1968, the eulogy in the Annual Report of the Public Schools credited her with making home economics an appropriate subject for matriculation, putting courses for all school levels into effect, publishing the first Department of Education recipe book and for "being instrumental in raising

the standard of teacher preparation for home economics" (ARPS, 1968-69, p. G80).

Many of the concrete items that Jessie McLenaghan had worked for proved unproductive. One example was matriculation status; in spite of the time and rhetoric devoted to obtaining matriculation status for home economics, only seven students outside Vancouver presented it for credit in 1941 (ARPS, 1940-41, p.D63). By 1965, home economics was no longer considered of equal status with academic subjects (Thomas, 1986, p. 115). The vision offered by the 1937 curriculum revision of educating the whole child 'head', 'heart' and 'hand', was superceded by emphasis on intellectual development alone. There was some success in home economics enrolment increases. In 1968-69 15% of the total school population took home economics and 48% of all high school students were enrolled in at least one home economics course (ARPS, 1968-69, p. G13). Although post-secondary home economics education was available in British Columbia, teacher qualifications had not improved. Jessie McLenaghan had reported in 1932 that 55% of the home economics teachers were university graduates (ARPS, 1931-32, p. L31). In 1968, the figure was 50% (ARPS, 1967-68, p. G63).

Applied art as part of home economics was a casualty in later years. It was discarded along with many other ideas of

the New Education after the Chant Commission of 1960. Grade seven was removed from the sphere of home economics at the same time. A protest was mounted against the Chant recommendations and McLenaghan was invited to join. She declined, saying that her time was past (Mitchell, 1989).

The tradition of inspecting all home economics teachers in the province continued until 1969. At that point the British Columbia Teachers' Federation requested that home economics inspectors no longer be permitted to write reports on home economics teachers unless specifically requested (Allester, 1969). Figures from Home Economics Branch files at the Public Archives of British Columbia showed the decline in inspections from 164 in 1960-61 to 54 in 1969-70. There were criticisms of the way in which the inspections were carried out; the inspectors were accused of being too rigid (Murphy, 1989). The title was changed to Advisor and then to Consultant, one of whom, Jean Irvine, petitioned the Ministry of Education in 1975 for five field consultants. Irvine cited the number of uncertified teachers, the impossibility of return visits and the loneliness of on-the-road travelling as reasons for the request (Irvine, 1975b). It was denied, no travel money was allotted, and by 1981 the Home Economics Branch had closed. The problems of the Home Economics Branch were similar to those faced by Jessie McLenaghan, but the educational climate was quite different. New Education was

no longer the reigning philosophy and practical arts was no longer a cornerstone of the educational system.

Chapter Four Endnotes

1. Fannie Twiss was responsible for the creation of the first Domestic Science promotional film in Canada which she showed at the Victoria, B.C. summer school in 1922 (Saskatchewan Department of Education Annual Report, 1922, p. 87). The manner in which the extension work was carried out in Saskatchewan was politically inspired. Each June, Twiss would inspect the schools which had had itinerant domestic science teachers. Her visit would take place in the morning, the parents would visit in the afternoon, and after a supper prepared by the pupils, the question of continuing the work for the next year would be discussed and voted on (Saskatchewan Department of Education Annual Report, 1921, p. 79).

2. In a history written in celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Faculty of Practical Arts at Teachers College, Columbia University, M.A. Bigelow claimed that the difference between practical arts and liberal arts was only in the emphasis of the former on practice or application to daily life. The two fundamental characteristics of practical arts were "knowledge which is practical and the technical ability or skill to put it into practice" (Bigelow, 1927, p. 766). At the height of its influence in 1927, the Faculty of Practical Arts had eight departments. Cremin (1961) claimed that up to twenty percent of the educational administrators in the United States trained at Teachers College (p. 221). See the following sources for more detail:

Bigelow, M.A. (1927). Thirty years of practical arts in Teachers College. Teachers College Record, 28 (8), 765-775.

Cremin, L. (1961). Transformation of the school: Progressivism in American education 1876-1957. New York: Knopf.

Cremin, L., Shannon, D. and Townsend, M. (1954). A history of Teachers College Columbia University. New York: Columbia University Press.

3. The use of the word "psychological" indicated influence from E.L. Thorndike's Laws of Learning, explained by Clara Brown, a contemporary home economics writer, as the ability to see a problem as a whole and therefore not work blindly (Brown, 1927, p. 250). This echoes Putman and Weir's admonishment that students should "see life steadily and see it whole" (Report, 1925, p. 44). Brown advocated the psychological approach to set high technical standards thereby encouraging students to feel satisfaction from doing

a good job. Conversely, Brown suggested failure would encourage additional effort. For further discussion, see:

Brown, Clara. (1927). The psychological approach. Journal of Home Economics, 19 (5), 245-251.

4. The 1936 amendment to the Public Schools Act which made home economics compulsory read:

In grade VII and VIII in the city schools of the first and second class and in any other school district where the Council of Public Instruction so directs the Board of School Trustees, in conformity with the regulations governing equipment and courses of study, shall establish in the schools under its jurisdiction courses in practical arts, including Manual Training and Home Economics. (Lightfoot & Maynard, 1971, p. 37)

The regulation took effect in September, 1937.

5. First class indicates average daily attendance of pupils not less than 1,000 per school year, while second class denotes average daily attendance of pupils between 250 and 1,000 per school year.

CHAPTER V AMBIVALENCE REVISITED: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this research was to study the ambivalent position of home economics in the public school system as a low-status academic subject and high-status practical subject. The word "ambivalent" conveys the sense of co-existing opposing beliefs about home economics. In this summary, findings are summarized, conclusions and implications drawn, and suggestions for further study made.

The central concept of home economics education which weaves together this study is that of a practical discipline which teaches both cultural and vocational values. The idea of the "home ideal" was a connecting thread, first introduced by Winnifred McKeand ("Domestic science in the school", 1903, p. 8), and paraphrased by Jessie McLenaghan as "a well-rounded conception of the many responsibilities contributing to worthy home membership" (McLenaghan, 1941, p. 748).

1903-1924

In the time period 1903-1924, home economics education was mainly directed toward girls' vocational training as homemakers. The first home economics teachers argued for home economics as more than cookery and sewing. Winnifred McKeand clearly stated her intentions to "apply theoretical knowledge of homemaking to make the homes of the people healthy and happy" ("Domestic science in the school", 1903,

p. 8). Elizabeth Berry wanted the teachers under her supervision to stress the more liberal "educative" concepts of home economics rather than merely technical instruction (VBST Annual Report, 1913, p. 63). Other individuals, most notably Alice Ravenhill and John Kyle, broadened the definition of home economics. Ravenhill promoted health, hygiene and the improvement of living standards as important reasons for teaching home economics. Kyle projected his own bias for art into the argument for teaching art in everyday life through home economics. He also espoused the New Education view of technical education as inseparable from all education: "Nature intended the adjustments of hand, eye and mind to be trained when the human is young, and the work of this adjustment is called simply education, not technical education " (Kyle, no date).

Practical home economics was overlaid with a moral message about the necessity to train good wives and mothers. This opinion was frequently expressed by male school inspectors and principals who were on the periphery of domestic science education, but were at the centre of administrative decision-making. McKeand, Berry and their colleagues aimed at training the hands and minds of their students to work together in a useful fashion, namely through the development of order, exactness and cleanliness. Early home economics philosophy aligned the teaching of cultural

values (through promotion of a "home ideal") with the teaching of vocational values (through training in proper habits). Class, while not a specific focus of this study, was an issue. The power to change an inferior home into one where the "matron exercises proper and efficient control" was bestowed upon home economics ("Vancouver girls to learn", 1905, p. 13). Practical application of skills was stressed as the "mordant which will set things in the memory" (British Columbia Department of Education Courses of Study, 1912, p. 38).

The initial separation of home economics and manual training teachers from the rest of the staff was both an advantage and a disadvantage. Practical education teachers were autonomous but risked being ignored or their programs easily discarded. Examinations, monthly report cards and other trappings of regular school work were instituted so that practical subjects would be taken more seriously. The danger was that these actions could potentially destroy the unique nature of a practical subject which allowed for student individuality and recognition of their needs.

Acceptance of practical education lasted only so long as economics supported diversity in the curriculum. When the Vancouver School Board found retrenchment necessary in 1916, home economics was immediately attacked as a frill. Although home economics was intended to improve family life, it was

seen as expendable at the precise time that it could have been an effective force in helping families through hard times.

A growing dissatisfaction with home economics and practical education became evident, compounded by a general malaise about education. Vocational education had been previously defined as training that was of immediate use to the student. This perspective was inadequate because students were spending more years at school and any vocational training they received would not be used immediately if at all. A compromise arose whereby practical education was supposed to relate as closely as possible to real life, but not train workmen or seamstresses. This approach initially favoured manual training which did not have the same moral urgency about it that home economics had. White (1951) observed that early proponents of manual training deliberately exaggerated the cultural aspects of manual training and downplayed its practical aspects. As a result, manual training inspectors could refer to the "cultural influences" that the subject had on the "general powers of the pupils" (ARPS, 1919-20, p. C49). Manual training did not trespass into the trade union field, as it would have if it had been truly vocational. White claimed that the end result was detrimental to manual training. The resulting uniformity of method and content created "a slow

intellectual stagnation" (White, 1951, p. 616). Another description of the effect of concentrating on cultural aspects of manual training was "degeneration into a sterile form" (Sutherland, 1976, p. 190).

Domestic science on the other hand was given "more utilitarian and practical values from the first" (White, 1951, p. 616). It was more readily accepted as a valuable part of a girl's education because it was useful in teaching vocational homemaking skills.

Following upon this, the second complicating factor in the foundation years of home economics was its increasing identification as a worthwhile female profession. In addition its proponents sought legitimation through high school matriculation credit. Goodson (1983) and Tomkins (1986) used "subject status" to explain curriculum stability and change. Their illustration was Latin, a subject which maintained its status in high schools long after it was relevant. Status was retained by providing employment for university graduates in Latin, who "unable to obtain other gainful employment, turned to teaching and became staunch advocates of the subject" (Tomkins, 1986, p. 82).

Home economics is marginally similar to Latin in that its teaching was assumed by a small number of university-trained women who had vested interests in preserving their jobs. However, home economics was substantially more

relevant to everyday living than Latin. Students genuinely liked home economics; mothers wanted it for their daughters because it was kept "up to date" while homes were inclined to "run in a rut" ("Home economics", 1924, p. 4).

The achievement of matriculation credit for home economics ostensibly offered a way to promote the subject and still retain its practical focus. Through status as an examinable subject, home economics received more respect. It was no longer a "blind alley" (VBST Annual Report, 1920, p. 12). Goodson (1983) considered conflict over the status of examinable knowledge as "essentially a battle over the material resources and career prospects available to each subject community" (1983, p. 403). In terms of resources, home economics was already low-status. Contrarily, it was also high-status. In a society which saw education as a means of social reform, middle-class groups such as the Local Councils of Women and the home economics teachers themselves believed that home economics would "imbue the young with high ideals of home life" (Young, 1924, p. 21). Proponents cast about for ways to improve educational status. Some observers, such as John Kyle, thought the real problem was with standards and methods of instruction. Consequently Elizabeth Berry was rehired as Supervisor of Home Economics and many calls were made for a provincial supervisor.

Another feature of the years between 1903 and 1924 was the gradual adoption of the progressive education view of the school as a means of improving individual lives through mass socialization. The reform mission of home economics in the New Education became "putting homes on a proper basis" (Young, 1924, p. 21). Some redefinition of home economics was required in order to meet demands that it be more "useful to the nation" ("Victoria Local Council", 1924, p. 3).

The Putman-Weir Report

The Putman-Weir Report (1925) muddled the waters of home economics educational reform by declaring all education simultaneously cultural and practical/vocational. By doing so, it continued the line of thought first proclaimed by J.W. Robertson who saw the "whole child" go to school, "indivisible into 'head', 'hand', and 'heart'" (Robertson, 1907).

The school survey had grown out of dissatisfaction with the products of the school system - the students - accompanied by a surge of interest in women's rights and the belief that citizens could influence educational outcomes.

Home economics was recognized for its capacity to teach girls homemaking skills which were "fundamental for building up and preserving a healthy nation" (Report, 1925, p. 91). The survey was supposed to be a stock-taking. It verified events

for home economics that had already occurred. For example, the matter of a provincial home economics supervisor was first suggested by the Vancouver School Board in 1916 after it had fired its own supervisor (VBST Minutes, 1916a).

Putman and Weir did not present new information to British Columbia. Rather, they directed and confirmed existing tendencies and opinions.

The Putman-Weir Report featured a strong belief in the integration of cultural and practical values in education. It proclaimed that "no antagonism should exist between the so-called cultural and practical viewpoints" (p. 38). Practical education would ground all education in real-life purposes. "All children receive cultural values from so-called vocational studies which could not be given by any other means....All education is cultural and all education is vocational" (p. 337). Home economics taught in a cultural mode would not train a girl for a specific occupation but would instead give her a "sane attitude to life by requiring her to deal with real projects" (p. 337). This approach seemed to mask the vocational purposes of home economics in educating only girls. In addition, the Report ignored the way schools were operating. There were examinations and there were allotments of resources according to the status of the subject. Jessie McLenaghan made a dry reference in later years to the basement location of the home economics

laboratory as "typifying the prestige of the subject" (McLenaghan, 1956, p. 8). She at least, if not Putman and Weir, assessed the situation of home economics realistically. Despite its practical aspects, home economics conflicted with a school system which demanded social efficiency. Home economics had previously enjoyed half-day classes. As it became integrated into the school system as a regular subject, it could no longer receive such special treatment.

Jessie McLenaghan

The Putman-Weir Report requested that a woman be appointed as supervisor who had a good understanding of the progressive principles of education. Jessie McLenaghan's experience and education indicated that she had this qualification. Her work in Saskatchewan between 1907 and 1924 probably introduced her to the "ubiquitous Norman Fergus Black", a major New Education theorist who later moved to British Columbia (Tomkins, 1986, p. 251). The philosophy that McLenaghan encountered at Teachers College, Columbia University in 1924 complemented New Education ideals. The home was viewed as the source of good influences which would develop men and women "with a right attitude towards the problems of life" (Cooley, et al., 1919, p. 58). The right attitude embodied social responsibility and concern for the

welfare of society as expressed through the family (Cooley, et al., 1918a, p. 119).

Unfavourable political and economic conditions kept the progressive education philosophy of the Putman-Weir Report (1925) on hold for the first few years of Jessie McLenaghan's tenure. Deprived of the status promised home economics by the Report, McLenaghan had to maintain its place in the school system by instrumental means. She "proved the worth of home economics" through provision of a text and a formal curriculum document in 1927 and political manoeuvring to have home economics receive full matriculation status in 1934 (McLenaghan, 1956, p. 8). McLenaghan's efforts at legitimacy were capped by the 1936 change in the Public School Act that made home economics compulsory (ARPS, 1935-36, p. H80). Political events influenced the advance of home economics. George Weir's appointment as Minister of Education in 1933 undoubtedly had a major effect with his stated belief in education that was "practical, realistic and cultural" ("British Columbia", 1934c, p. 824).

The emphasis on the "family" was one major difference between McLenaghan and her predecessors, who had given precedence to training of the individual student over group work. When McLenaghan redirected the focus, it was not with the intention of augmenting or reciprocating family values. Rather it was a transition between the transmission of

knowledge as a "one-way movement intended to inculcate the student in certain skills and values" (Miller, 1987, p. 94) and the transaction of knowledge, focusing on "problem solving and cognitive growth" (p. 95). Problem-solving, for example, was a motivating factor behind the introduction of machine-sewing at the grade six level (ARPS, 1926-27, p. M65). However, individual decision-making was not permitted in McLenaghan's pursuit of high standards in order to prove that home economics was a 'prepared' subject. The best example of the lack of choice was in the 1936 curriculum revision. Legitimation and proof of worth were overriding concerns for McLenaghan. They were imperative for a subject which was under frequent attack as a frill. McLenaghan operated on the premise that proof of the academic value of home economics education would secure its place in the curriculum. It was not valued for its practical worth. This was quite contrary to the stated beliefs of the Putman-Weir Report (1925) which had given equal status to practical and academic subjects. A less prescriptive curriculum might have resulted if the Report and the 1936 curriculum revision had occurred more closely together.

McLenaghan was stymied in her moves to improve teacher qualifications because no locally-trained university graduates in home economics were available. If home economics was to be considered academic, it would have to be

taught at the high school level by teachers who were university graduates. If home economics was to consist of meaningful practical projects and activities, it would be seriously constrained by 40 or 50 minute periods. The result was paradoxical: McLenaghan opted for the survival of home economics as a high school subject, but in a truncated form. Inspections and a prescriptive curriculum were seen as necessary to counteract the numbers of unqualified teachers. The problem came in trying to achieve academic status while maintaining practical value with the end result being over-emphasis on standards and technical instruction.

Discussion

The perspective taken in this study is that of education as a system, and home economics as a political subject within that system answerable to community values. The systems perspective is useful when discussing how failure to achieve one particular goal impinged upon several other events. If a Chair of Home Economics had been established in 1920 as it very nearly was (Stewart, 1990, p. 48), or failing that if the Chair had not been rescinded in 1931, McLenaghan might have been able to pay more attention to whether home economics actually linked home and school practice instead of proving its worth as a school subject. If matriculation had been less of a goal, and the maintenance of a strong

elementary school program made a priority, the academic/practical competition for examinable subject status in high school might not have existed. Instead of competing with geometry for high school students, home economics might have remained viable at the elementary level, taught by specialists much as the subject of music is today.

The political aspects of home economics are evident in the way in which it reflected the values of the education community. Between 1903 and 1924, education was viewed as an individual experience, and this attitude was reflected in such home economics manifestations as the "hollow square" kitchen. The "unit kitchen" superceded the hollow square, along with progressive education ideas of using schooling to reshape society. Home economics students would make "family-size" recipes in a "family setting" but there was no intended reciprocity between home and school. The intent was to emulate the ideal family, not support the existing one.

Peterat (1983) outlined three areas of ambivalence in the field of home economics; it is a profession which combines three problematic status symbols; women, education, and home economics. The first ambivalency involved home economics as a female-dominated field in an education system oriented to male values and priorities. Discussions and comments about home economics were most often made by men who saw its value in training girls to be good wives and mothers.

The professors of Practical Arts at Teachers College, Columbia University invited women and men to share equally in home issues, but their view was not sustained. Although Jessie McLenaghan had likely received exposure to alternate conceptions of home economics, she wrote as late as 1964 that "marriage counsellors frequently tell us that many of the difficulties in early married life are due to the inefficiency of the wife in preparing adequate meals on a limited budget" (McLenaghan, 1964, p. 35). Women's moral responsibility to maintain household standards was a tenet firmly held by McLenaghan.

Ambivalence was also evident in the imposition of technical over moral or ethical standards. Jessie McLenaghan placed technical standards first but was willing to acquiesce in cases where justifiable decisions had been made (Murphy, 1989). In McLenaghan's view, personal standards or judgment of worth could not be invoked until a level of technical standards had been reached which adequately accounted for health and hygiene issues. Home economics educators wanted to be considered more than "good housekeepers". McLenaghan wrestled with the problem of how to achieve a certain standard without imposing a moral standard. The contradiction is still with us. McLenaghan saw university training of teachers as the answer, much as Ravenhill before her, on the grounds that exposure to a broader range of

subjects would have a liberalizing effect and be a source of credibility.

This leads logically to the third ambivalency of home economics as a credible academic subject with a practical focus. To be both equal to and different from other subjects in the school system requires conforming to an inflexible school system. Before becoming an official part of the school system, home economics enjoyed half-day classes, but it was dispensable in times of financial restraint. McLenaghan was able to improve the academic credibility of home economics which had eluded those before her, but in doing so, altered the logistics of teaching.

Conclusions

Between 1903 and 1939 home economics education in British Columbia dealt directly with subject legitimation. Jessie McLenaghan achieved status for home economics because it was part of the progressive education package. Unfortunately many of the ideas of the New Education were discarded after the Chant Commission of 1960 (Sutherland, 1976). Between 1960 and 1991 home economics has again been struggling for survival, a practical subject in an academic milieu. The importance of bringing meaning to daily life is as pressing now as it was to Marion Talbot in 1913. It is clear to me that Saidak's description of the "ingrained

ambivalence" of home economics is as true for home economics viewed as part of the progressive education movement as it is for home economics viewed as part of the feminist movement. Saidak writes that household labor is "socially necessary, skilled and therefore valuable" (1987, p. 191). Home economics education in the schools is a means of legitimating household labor (including knowledge of health and human development concerns) as a necessary part of a healthy, successful and meaningful life.

The Putman-Weir Report (1925) placed cultural and vocational values together, expressed as practical education. They made a customary (male) assumption that home economics was for females only. What would education look like if the study of daily life was equivalent to any other kind of study? To answer this question, each person must explore his or her own moral understanding of the difference between "living a life" and "making a living" (Prenter, 1923, p. 1). The metaphor for me which illustrates the difference is the "yellow pudding" (Shapiro, 1986, p. 221). In a practical sense, it warns me about the pitfalls of emphasizing technical standards without questioning the morality of those standards.

Implications

This study has implications for home economics teachers, curriculum developers and future researchers. Home economics teachers in British Columbia may find, as I have, echoes of their own practices through those of Winnifred McKeand, Elizabeth Berry, Jessie McLenaghan and other home economics pioneers. One belief that needs to be analyzed is whether broadening and increasing the number of subjects has a genuine effect on what is taught. For example, Mabel Allen, Supervisor of Home Economics for the Vancouver School Board articulated the "new" home economics units in the 1936 curriculum revision which made home economics particularly relevant to daily life: "social customs and usage", "co-operation within the family group", "the home as a social centre" and "appreciation of a satisfying home life" (VBST Annual Report 1936, p. 34). A submission made to the Sullivan Royal Commission on Education in 1988 on behalf of the Quesnel Chapter of Teachers of Home Economics Specialist Association (THESA), enunciated a similar expansion of content which allegedly increased meaning:

Formerly one could categorize home economics as "cooking and sewing"; today our students still learn about those topics but in a much wider context ranging from anorexia, diet-control, food additives, consumerism, textile-labelling to sexuality education and use of

family resources. (Robitaille, Oberg, Overgaard, & McBurney, 1988, p. 35)

Home economics teachers must ask themselves how enlarging of the content makes home economics more meaningful for students. In 1941, Jessie McLenaghan lauded the acceptance of home economics for "equipping the students for life" rather than "cramming them with content" (p. 748). Why do home economics educators still refer to quantity of content as evidence of quality?

Curriculum developers may find similarities in the circumstances that lead to curriculum reform. Both the Putman-Weir School Survey and the Sullivan Royal Commission occurred in times of relative prosperity for British Columbia. Both recommended the inclusion of a practical arts component in the curriculum. Jessie McLenaghan justified the place of practical arts as a "necessary agency in the development of types of knowledge, skills and attitudes which are increasingly necessary for successful living in a new and extremely complex social and economic order" (ARPS, 1935-36, p. S48). The mission statement which resulted from the Sullivan Royal Commission closely parallels that statement: "The purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and

sustainable economy (Year 2000: A framework for learning, 1989, p. i).

Education in both instances is clearly connected to the achievement of responsible citizenship. In 1991, as in 1936, practical arts occupies a mandated position in the curriculum revision. The opportunity to include home economics in elementary schools or with children between the ages of 9 and 13 is attractive and challenging. The demands on children of the present day appear to be even more pressing than in the past, with smaller families, advanced technology and further distancing from family roots. Recently an Ottawa home economist praised the adeptness of today's children at using microwave ovens, but asked why they weren't being taught basic culinary skills ("Home economist", 1990). The demand for everyday skills is relevant in a school system which purports to be working toward a sustainable society. Thompson (1984) has suggested that the everyday skills of home economics are especially valuable because they are counter-entropic: "Sewing up a ripped pair of jeans is not a trivial task...It is a means to conserve resources in which families have invested time and energy" (p. 27). The practices of home economists who promote product over process, who choose expediency over experience, contribute to the meaninglessness of a subject area which should be intensely meaningful. Cooley et al. (1919) warned beginning

teachers to distinguish between getting things done in a hurry and making the wisest use of time. Their example was that of a teacher who measured out the muffin ingredients for her students: "The teacher was evidently more interested in muffins than in the growth of girls" (p. 314). While the language may be outdated, the aim of education to help the child experience life and participate in life activities is as valid today as it was then.

Home economics must be simultaneously part of general education and part of women's history. It is important to be both in order to retain its unique identification as purveyors of domestic knowledge and supporters of the importance of the home and family. Being female in a female-oriented profession does not have to be a disadvantage. Gilligan's work (1982) suggests that women's unique sense of ethics creates a particularly advantageous type of understanding in ambiguous situations where a more technical approach would be destructive.

Homemaking, whether done by women or men, deserves to be recognized as a legitimate occupation. Purvis (1985) called for ridding domestic subjects of their definition as essentially feminine, developing non-sexist teaching materials and teaching methods, and broadening the content of the curriculum. "The life skills taught in home economics have the capacity to enable both boys and girls to leave

school equipped with the personal confidence and independence to participate freely in and exert control over their environment" (Purvis, 1985, p.70). Home economics has transformative possibilities, but these are due to its valuable practical nature, rather than to academic aspirations. Jessie McLenaghan promoted academic acceptance over practical value. In doing so she achieved a place for home economics in the school system that was too closely tied to progressive education ideology to survive its falling out of fashion. We can learn from McLenaghan's challenges and reground home economics in ethical decision-making about family matters, rather than activity-making.

Recommendations for Further Study

The history of home economics education offers several opportunities for further study.

- 1) Canadian home economists need to seek out more pioneers in home economics education, and to develop an interest in, appreciation of, and admiration for the women who started the profession of home economics and who worked for legitimacy and recognition in an often hostile environment. Many interprovincial connections are apparent in this study and beg to be further explored. Three women immediately come to mind: Mary Urie Watson, first Principal of Macdonald Institute; Fannie Twiss, the first Director of Home Economics in Saskatchewan; and Annie Juniper who held administrative

home economics positions in Nova Scotia, Quebec and Manitoba as well as British Columbia. What motivated these women? What can we learn about early home economists and early feminists from them?

- 2) The contention that home economics was instituted to educate those of lower and inferior classes to middle class standards needs to be studied. This claim jeopardizes the original moral grounding of home economics promoted by Marion Talbot and Alice Chown among others. Philosophical writing by Marjorie Brown has assisted home economists in acknowledging the ideas of teaching technical skills and teaching moral or right living through those skills. More historical study, particularly in Canada, is needed to determine if the development was similar across the country.
- 3) Do practical subjects achieve status on a different basis than academic ones? Goodson's (1983) typology relates specifically to the acceptance of academic subjects. By examination of other practical subjects such as technology education or industrial education, a specific practical subject typology may be possible to identify.

Investigation of such questions offers the opportunity to strengthen and enhance the position of home economics as a legitimate practical subject and promote better understanding about its position in education. Continual discourse and

reflection is mandatory; it is an asset, not a liability, to want to interpret and reinvent one's own meaning of home economics.

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