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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

EDUCATION FROM THE TOP DOWN:

A BIOGRAPHY OF W.H. SWIFT

BY

STEVEN PAUL BODDINGTON



A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND  
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THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

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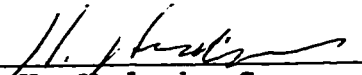
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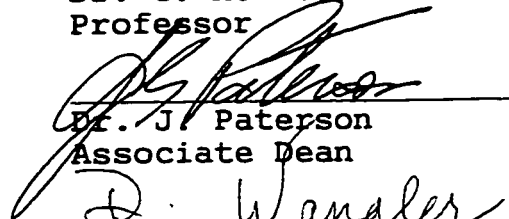
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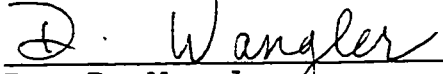
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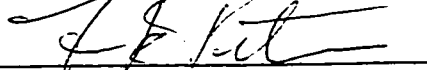
  
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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the career of W.H. Swift from a biographical standpoint. Swift's professional career spanned over six decades covering work as a teacher and educator of teachers, school inspector, author, educational administrator, and eventually, senior public servant, as Deputy Minister of Education for the Province of Alberta. He had direct experience with, and was a major influence on, many of the major changes in educational philosophy and practice in the Province, particularly from an administrative perspective. It was perhaps his vantage point as both educator and administrator at the Normal School and governmental levels, that allowed him his unique view of Alberta's overall educational landscape.

This dissertation provides a much needed multidimensional view of a man whose career has encompassed all aspects of the educational experience in Alberta from the late 1920's and the "progressive 30's" through the war years to the revolutionary and turbulent 1960's. Swift's administrative style is analyzed as are the character traits which helped make up his unique personality. Further, the dissertation provides insight into the educational bureaucracy of the social credit government and the values and attitudes that governed its view of education from the mid 1930s up to Swift's retirement as Deputy Minister of Education in 1966. Finally, it examines a native son, born and educated in Alberta, who rose through the ranks and had "hands on" experience as student, teacher,

administrator, and public servant. It is hoped this study will not only illuminate the varied career of W.H. Swift, but also show how his work directly influenced education in Alberta, both through curriculum and administration.

**FOR DEBBY, KATE AND MEG**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Several individuals have played an important part in the completion of this dissertation. I would first of all like to dedicate this work to my wife and best friend Debby, without whose help and constant inspiration my university career would never have begun. Thank you from the bottom of my heart, my darling, for the sacrifices you have made these past several years. As well, this dissertation is dedicated to our wonderful girls, Kate and Meg, who have always brought light to our lives.

I would also like to acknowledge the help and inspiration of my mother and father, Harry and Joan Boddington. In many ways, this doctorate is the culmination of their dreams as well. Thank you Mum and Dad, you never lost the faith! I would like also to thank my "other Mom", Mary Waldal; Ace, Irene, Marie and Michael Cetinski; my sister Thelma Kellogg; and my niece, Karin Kellogg. All of these wonderful people provided not only inspiration, but in some cases, the use of their very homes. Likewise, the help of my old band mates of some twenty-five years, Brian Koehli and Linsey Umrysh, and his better half, Lindsay, must be likewise, acknowledged.

The help, encouragement, and inspiration provided by my thesis supervisor Dr. Henry Hodysh is, of course, gratefully acknowledged, as is that of the rest of my committee: Dr. Gordon McIntosh; Dr Ken Munro; Dr. David Wangler; Dr. John Paterson; and Dr. David Jones. I would also like to

acknowledge the inspiration and help provided by Dr. Robert Carney, Randy McKinnon, Dr. Patricia Rooke, Dr. Glenn Swift, and the late Dr. John Foster in the production of this dissertation.

Finally, of course, the tireless help and cooperation of the late Dr. W.H. Swift, the subject of this dissertation, who patiently provided the author with hours of conversation and vast amounts of personal written material and memorabilia, cannot be underestimated. Dr. Swift always made himself available to the author for interviews and consultations, sometimes, upon very little notice. My only regret is that Dr. Swift did not live to see the completion of this project. Thank you Bill, I hope it measures up!

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PUBLIC EDUCATION FROM THE TOP DOWN:  
A BIOGRAPHY OF W.H. SWIFT

William Herbert (Bill) Swift (1904-1996) had a varied career covering nearly every facet of the educational endeavour possible in the Province of Alberta. Although he is perhaps best known for his work as one of Alberta's longest serving Deputy Ministers of Education (1945-1966), his activities in the area of school inspection and as an instructor and administrator in teacher education, helped amass the broad experience which is the subject of this dissertation.

**Purpose of the Study**

This biography provides a much needed multi-dimensional view of a man whose career has encompassed all aspects of the educational experience in Alberta from the mid 1920's and the "progressive 30's" through the war years to the revolutionary and turbulent 1960's. It also provides a view of a native son, born and educated in Alberta, who rose through the ranks and had "hands on" experience as student, teacher, administrator, and public servant. It is hoped that this study will not only illuminate the varied career of W.H. Swift and demonstrate how his work directly influenced education in Alberta, but it will also create an opportunity for educational historians to gain deeper insight into the overall history of education in the Province, from teaching and teacher education, to its bureaucratic underpinnings.

William H. Swift was a rarity in that, in his lifetime, he participated in virtually every level of public education in the province of Alberta. Swift's professional career spanned over six decades covering work as a teacher and educator of teachers, school inspector, author, educational administrator, and eventually, public servant, as Deputy Minister of Education for the Province. He was a major catalyst in the implementation of many of the major changes in educational philosophy, policy and curriculum in Alberta. For the historian of education, Swift's experience provides a clear and relatively unobstructed view of the Province's educational system and its development up to his retirement as a public servant in 1966. Although he could not be described as a ground-breaker in terms of educational philosophy, he did provide the kind of pragmatic outlook so necessary for the implementation of many of the ideas which came to fruition during his tenure as Deputy Minister of Education.

Swift's career was not limited to Provincial education. He was also active nationally and internationally. He served as Chairman on the National Council on School Broadcasting and was President of the Canadian Education Association. Internationally, he was involved with UNESCO and was a Canadian representative to the International Conference on Education at Geneva. However, it is perhaps his vantage point as both educator and administrator at the school board and governmental levels, that allowed him a unique view of

Alberta's overall educational landscape.

This study, as well as chronicling the life and contributions of W.H. Swift, examines the cultural, political and educational experiences which moulded his character and his educational thought. Secondly, based upon Swift's varied career as a public servant, this biography attempts to provide the basis for an understanding of the organization and development of the educational system and its bureaucratic apparatus in the Province of Alberta from the beginnings of the Social Credit regime in the mid 1930s to its demise in 1971. Finally, through an examination of Swift's involvement in various educational societies and organizations at all levels of the educational hierarchy, it is anticipated that some light will be shed on the informal exchange of ideas for which official and unofficial gatherings of this kind often serve as a forum. It may be these sorts of discussions which, more often than not, provide the philosophical backdrop which creates and justifies educational change and the development, particularly in government circles, of an "official attitude".

#### Statement of the Problem

The problem with which this proposed project is concerned can be highlighted by the following two questions: 1. What was the nature and extent of W.H. Swift's involvement in Alberta's educational system between 1925 and 1964? 2. Given the importance of the positions he held, what was his

involvement in and influence upon the educational changes which took place during this period? The consideration of these questions will necessitate inquiry into not only the nature of Swift's thought vis a vis education and educational change, but also into what motivated his involvement and his efforts in the various activities he undertook. In other words, what was the root of the personal motivation which fuelled his rapid rise in the educational hierarchy of the Province?

#### Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

The dissertation is primarily a biographical study of William Herbert Swift with an emphasis on his involvement in teacher training at the Normal Schools and in public service as Deputy Minister of Education for the Province of Alberta from 1946 to 1964. This emphasis gives rise to the probability that the contributions of other important educators of the period will be slighted. Nevertheless, the scope of the study is intentionally limited to the life and educational thought of Swift in the context of the times in which he lived, in order to gain a complete picture of his work, his leadership, and his contributions to the field of education in Alberta.

It is the biographer's view that the most effective way of presenting the life of W.H. Swift is in relation to the context of the times in which he lived. With this goal in

mind, no attempt has been made to "modernize" or "correct" Dr. Swift's writing or the interpretation of his oral interview material. It remains, of course, the biographer's prerogative, as an aid to understanding, to provide explanation and comment where it is deemed necessary.

It is also outside the purview of this study to provide a complete history of each of the organizations and/or developments discussed within this framework. These are, however, examined and discussed to the extent that Swift was involved with them. Further, the dissertation does not attempt to analyze the activities of W.H. Swift outside of his involvement in educational matters during the above period. His work internationally, and otherwise, on various committees after his retirement as Deputy Minister, will not be dealt with in great detail.

### Need for the Study

Although biographical works have been written on many of Swift's well known contemporaries, McNally, H.C. Newland, Herbert T. Coutts, M.E. LaZerte, and William Aberhart,<sup>1</sup> W.H.

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<sup>1</sup>H.T. Coutts and B.E. Walker, G. Fred: The Story of G. Fred McNally, (Don Mills: J.M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1970); Patricia Oviatt, "The Educational Contributions of H.C. Newland" (M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1970); Donald M. Myrehaug, "M.E. LaZerte: Contributions to Teacher Education in Alberta" (M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1972); G.H. Buck, "Pioneer Educational Innovator", Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 35:2 (June 1989); John W. Chalmers, Gladly He Would Teach: A Biography of Milton Ezra LaZerte, (Edmonton: Alberta Teachers' Association Educational Trust, 1978); Barrie C. Oviatt, "The Papers of William Aberhart as

Swift's career has remained a mystery. The only treatment of Swift to date has been an autobiographical collection of his memoirs edited by J.W. Chalmers<sup>2</sup>. As enlightening as this collection was, it only dealt with Swift's experiences as a School Inspector between the years 1930 and 1935. Nothing has yet been written of his eminent career in the Normal Schools nor of his prominence as Deputy Minister of Education, a position he held for nearly twenty years. Much less has anyone attempted the full biographical treatment which Swift's career so richly deserves. This dissertation will attempt to correct this deficiency.

The time is also ripe to begin a study of this kind for another reason. During the last two years of his life, W.H. Swift consented, finally, to a number of personal interviews pertaining to his career in education. As a result of this, many hours of valuable conversation have been collected. To talk with and record for posterity the views of such a prominent educator and public servant was an opportunity that could not be passed by.

### Literature Review

Since this study deals with the career of W.H. Swift and

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Minister of Education, 1935-1943" (M.Ed. Thesis, University of Alberta, 1971).

<sup>2</sup>William H. Swift, Memoirs of a Frontier School Inspector in Alberta, ed. John W. Chalmers, (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1986).

his relationship with education in Alberta, both at the teaching and governmental levels, a survey of some general historical material on the Province, and the development of its education will be useful. In this regard, the historical surveys of J.G. MacGregor, and H. Palmer and T. Palmer, as well as G. Friesen's study on the prairie provinces are adequate to provide any contextual information.<sup>3</sup> Works dealing with the early underpinnings of the bureaucratic administration of education in Canada and its promoters include work by Alison Prentice who followed in the tradition of the then, groundbreaking neo-marxist work of M. Katz on the United States;<sup>4</sup> and the more recent offering by Bruce Curtis. Curtis used an interdisciplinary approach in his analysis of school inspection and state formation in Canada West in the 1840s.<sup>5</sup> The history of Alberta was influenced by political events which naturally affected the administration and practice of education in the province. Three parties enjoyed the reins of power during Swift's life, the United Farmers of

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<sup>3</sup>James G. MacGregor, A History of Alberta, (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1972); Howard Palmer and Tamara Palmer, Alberta, A New History, (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, Ltd., 1990); Gerald Friesen, The Canadian Prairies: A History, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).

<sup>4</sup>Alison Prentice, The School Promoters: Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Upper Canada, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977); Michael Katz, Class, Bureaucracy and Schools, (New York: Praeger, 1973).

<sup>5</sup>Bruce Curtis, True Government By Choice Men? Inspection, Education, and State Formation in Canada West, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).



Alberta, the Social Credit party, and the Conservatives. Of these, the scope of the proposed dissertation will concentrate on the former two. Works dealing with the politics of Alberta, include those by L.G. Thomas, L.H. Thomas, W. Irvine, J.A. Irving, C.B. Macpherson, and A. Finkel.<sup>6</sup>

Of the great number of works dealing with educational concerns in Alberta, very few can claim to be truly comprehensive surveys. The best overall works on public education in the province have been produced by J. Chalmers and N. Tkach who dealt with the histories of public and Catholic education respectively.<sup>7</sup> Another, perhaps less institutional, general overview was produced by Sheehan, in 1986.<sup>8</sup> Other comprehensive studies which fit into particular chronological frameworks include the works of C.L. Race, on

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<sup>6</sup>Lewis H. Thomas, The Struggle for Responsible Government in the North-West Territories, 1870-1897, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978); Lewis G. Thomas, The Liberal Party in Alberta: A History of Politics in the Province of Alberta, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959); W. Irvine, Farmers in Politics, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1920); John A. Irving, The Social Credit Movement in Alberta, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959); C.B. Macpherson, Democracy in Alberta; The Theory and Practice of a Quasi-Party System, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962); Alvin Finkel, The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989).

<sup>7</sup>John W. Chalmers, Schools of the Foothills Province: The Story of Public Education in Alberta, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967); Nicholas Tkach, Alberta Catholic Schools; A Social History, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Publications Services, 1983).

<sup>8</sup>Nancy M. Sheehan, "Education, the Society and Curriculum in Alberta, 1905-1980: An Overview", in Schools in the West, eds. Nancy Sheehan et.al., (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1986).

the issue of compulsory schooling to 1942, E.D. Hodgson's study on changing philosophies and pedagogical concerns to 1963, and Gillies' work on the large units of school administration during the 1930s.<sup>9</sup> I. Goresky presented a general overview of the development of the province's school system. He also included a discussion of the early development of the large school units as well as a brief discussion of their early operation.<sup>10</sup>

There have also been a number of valuable studies dealing with specific regions. In this regard, the most prominent have been, E.L. Janes' work on Edmonton and studies on Calgary by J.R. Houghton and L.A. Daniels.<sup>11</sup> Material pertaining to various organizations with a direct interest in education include J.C. Chalmers' examination of the Alberta Teachers' Association, T.C. Weidenhamer's work on the Alberta School

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<sup>9</sup>Cecil L. Race, "Compulsory Schooling in Alberta, 1888-1942" (M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1978); Ernest D. Hodgson, "The Nature and Purpose of the Public School in the North-West Territories (1885-1905) and Alberta (1905-1963)", (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alberta, 1964); J.W. Gillies, "School Divisions in Alberta: Their Organization, Operation and Contributions to Educational Progress" (M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1942).

<sup>10</sup>Isidore Goresky, "The Beginning and Growth of the Alberta School System" (M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1945).

<sup>11</sup>Edward L. Janes, "An Historical Survey of Education in the Strathmore area of Edmonton, 1900-1958", 1900-1958" (M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1963); Leroi A. Daniels, "The History of Education in Calgary" (M.A. thesis, University of Washington, 1954); John R. Houghton, "The Calgary Public School System, 1939-1969: A history of Growth and Development" (M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1951).

Trustees' Association, and W.D. McDougall's history of the Education Society of Edmonton.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, there are those, often critical, works which have dealt with specific issues pertaining to the history of education in Alberta. The most recent of these is Amy J. von Heyking's exhaustive study of the development of the social studies curriculum in the province.<sup>13</sup> This study proved particularly enlightening with regard to early ideas about character and good citizenship; aspects which undoubtedly helped shape Swift's personality and his approach to education. Chiste's work also dealt with curriculum change. He wrote on the "enterprise program" of 1936.<sup>14</sup> Sheane attempted an examination of the major curriculum revisions in Alberta to 1947, and gave an assessment of the effectiveness of each.<sup>15</sup> Studies by Patterson and later, N. Kach provided

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<sup>12</sup>John C. Chalmers, Teachers of the Foothills Province: The Story of the Alberta Teachers' Association, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968); T.C. Weidenhamer, The Alberta School Trustees Association, (Edmonton: Douglas Printing Co. Ltd., 1971); William D. McDougall, The First Forty Years of the Education Society of Edmonton, 1927-1967, (Edmonton: Education Society of Edmonton, 1967).

<sup>13</sup>Amy J. von Heyking, "Shaping and Education for the Modern World: A History of the Alberta Social Studies Curriculum, 1905 to 1965", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Calgary, 1996, 191.

<sup>14</sup>A. Chiste, "The Development of the Elementary Social Studies Programme in Alberta", (M.Ed. Thesis, University of Alberta, 1963)

<sup>15</sup>Gordon K. Sheane, "The History and Development of the Curriculum of the Elementary School in Alberta", (M.Ed. thesis, University of Toronto, 1948).

different views of "progressive education" in the province.<sup>16</sup> In this regard, P. Oviatt discussed the contribution and involvement of H.C. Newland, one of the central figures of the period.<sup>17</sup> Two works involving the debate which was set off by the publication of Hilda Neatby's scathing attack on progressive education, So Little for the Mind<sup>18</sup>, in the early 1950s, demand attention because the issue was such an important part of W.H. Swift's career, as Deputy Minister of Education. The first, by C. Ross, analyzed Neatby's attack in terms of the reawakening of a dormant conservative ethos long present in Canadian culture<sup>19</sup>. The second, a more empirical work, co-authored by N. Kach and K. Mazurek, analyzed the results of the Cameron Commission of 1959, which came about as a direct result of the progressive/essentialist

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<sup>16</sup>Robert S. Patterson, "The Establishment of Progressive Education in Alberta" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1968), and "Progressive Education: Impetus to Educational Change in Alberta and Saskatchewan", in Education in Canada: An Interpretation, ed. E. Brian Titley, and Peter J. Miller, (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1982); Nick Kach, "Progressive Education in Alberta", in Essays on Canadian Education, eds. Nick Kach et al (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1986).

<sup>17</sup>P.E. Oviatt, "The Educational Contributions of H.C. Newland", (M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1970).

<sup>18</sup>Hilda Neatby, So Little For The Mind, (Toronto: Clark, Irwin and Company Limited, 1953).

<sup>19</sup>Campbell Ross, "The Neatby Debate in Alberta: Clue to a National Dialectic", in Exploring Our Educational Past, Nick Kach and Kas Mazurek, eds., (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1992).

controversy.<sup>20</sup>

The most abundant of all the historical literature available in the area of education in the province are the many biographies commemorating the careers of notable individuals. In general, these involve male government officials, usually of anglo-saxon or anglo-celtic origin, who were deemed significant in the growth of education. F.W.G. Haultain and D.J. Goggin, two of the more conspicuous figures from the era of the North-West Territories, have been examined by R.S. Patterson and G. MacEwan, in the case of the former, and A. Selinger and N. MacDonald in the case of Goggin.<sup>21</sup> Two Alberta premiers have been studied in the context of education. A.D. Marzolf wrote on A.C. Rutherford and B. Oviatt examined the papers of William Aberhart as the Minister of Education.<sup>22</sup> General biographies of the two have been

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<sup>20</sup>Nick Kach and Kas Masurek, "The Cameron Commission and the Social Context of Educational Reforms", in Exploring Our Educational Past, eds. Nick Kach and Kas Mazurek, (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1992).

<sup>21</sup>Robert S. Patterson, "F.W.G. Haultain and Education in the Early West", (M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1961); Grant MacEwan, Frederick Haultain: Frontier Statesman of the Canadian Northwest, (Saskatoon: Western Producer Books, 1985); Alphonse Selinger, "The Contributions of D.J. Goggin to the Development of Education in the North-West Territories, 1893-1902", (M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1960); Neil McDonald, "David J. Goggin: Promoter of National Schools", in Shaping the Schools of the Canadian West, eds. David C. Jones et al, (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Limited, 1979).

<sup>22</sup>Archie D. Marzolf, "Alexander Cameron Rutherford and his Influence on Alberta's Educational Program", (M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1961); Barrie C. Oviatt, "The Papers of William Aberhart as Minister of Education, 1935-1943", (M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1971).

produced by D.R. Babcock, in the case of Rutherford, and D.R. Elliott and I. Miller of Aberhart.<sup>23</sup>

Valuable oral research has been heavily relied upon by several studies. These include those by P. Oviatt, L.J. Wilson, H.T. Coutts, B.E. Walker, and H. Hodysh and G. McIntosh.<sup>24</sup> Often this dialogue is presented verbatim. Germane autobiographical studies include the previously mentioned, Memoirs of a Frontier School Inspector, by W.H. Swift, and The Unfinished Journey of Herbert T. 'Pete' Coutts.<sup>25</sup>

Further afield, recent Canadian and American educational biographies abound. One of the most useful Canadian studies was Giles' work on Samuel John Willis, Deputy Minister of Education in British Columbia from 1919 to 1945.<sup>26</sup> As well as documenting Willis' exploits it also helped shed light on

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<sup>23</sup>Douglas R. Babcock, Alexander Cameron Rutherford: A Gentleman of Strathcona, (Calgary: Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism, 1989); David R. Elliott and Iris Miller, Bible Bill: A Biography of William Aberhart, (Edmonton: Reidmore, 1987).

<sup>24</sup>Patricia Oviatt, Op.cit.; Leroy J. Wilson, "Perren Baker and the United Farmers of Alberta - Educational Principals and Policies of an Agrarian Government", (M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1970); H.T. Coutts and B.E. Walker, Op.Cit.; H. Hodysh and G. McIntosh, Op.Cit.

<sup>25</sup>W.H. Swift, Op.Cit.; Herbert T. Coutts, "The Unfinished Journey of Herbert T. 'Pete' Coutts", (Unpublished Manuscript, 1982).

<sup>26</sup>Valerie M. E. Giles, "Historical Evolution of the Office of Deputy Minister in British Columbia Educational Policymaking 1919-1945: The Career of Samuel John Willis", unpublished M.A. thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1983.

the evolution of the office of Deputy Minister and in the development of policy-making in the province. This study was invaluable as a comparative model. Another recent Canadian study by David Royal explored the basic assumptions behind "traditional education." Royal used the life story and work of Mark Holmes, Professor Emeritus of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, and self described, "radical conservative", as a platform from which to base his study.<sup>27</sup> Finally, Raymond Bodnar's "The Necessity for Biographies and Autobiographies of Modern Educational Administrators",<sup>28</sup> argued that to ignore this endeavour "renders the very idea of education as incomplete and shortsighted."<sup>29</sup> Bodner used examples of groups, individuals and institutions to show that by "implementing legitimate and pragmatic methods"<sup>30</sup>, education can have a broader and greater scope than is presently being carried out.

Several recent American biographical works have provided valuable insights for this study. Campaigne's study of the role of academic science through the life of geneticist,

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<sup>27</sup>David William Royal, "Portrait of a Traditional Educator", unpublished Ph.D dissertation, University of Toronto, 1996.

<sup>28</sup>Raymond Bodnar, "The Necessity for Biographies and Autobiographies of Modern Educational Administrators", unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Toronto, 1995.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 2.

George Wells Beadle was useful,<sup>31</sup> as was Susan McCue's treatment of Andrew David Holt, one-time president of the University of Tennessee, and educational leader in the state for over fifty years.<sup>32</sup> Two other educational-administrative biographies pertinent to this study were McGarrh's work on Mildred Doyle, a superintendent in the Tennessee public school system for over thirty years and Nochelski's treatment of administrator Thomas Bapst. Doyle helped transform an antiquated postwar school system into a "modern marvel" and Bapst held administrative positions within the Buffalo, New York public school system, including that of Superintendent. Both explored the intimate connection between politics and educational administration.<sup>33</sup> Finally, Marty Butt's study of five "pragmatic" California school superintendents, who successfully turned "vision into action", served as a valuable comparative tool.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>David A. Campaigne, "An Academic Catalyst: The Life and Work of George Wells Beadle", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1997.

<sup>32</sup>Susan Harris McCue, "Life History of Andrew David Holt: An Interpretive Biography of One of Tennessee's Leading Educators", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Tennessee, 1995.

<sup>33</sup>Kellie Wilkinson McGarrh, "Hangin' In Tough: The Life of Superintendent Mildred E. Doyle, 1904-1989", unpublished ED.D. dissertation, University of Tennessee, 1995; Paul W. Nochelski, "No Royal Road to Learning: The Life and Educational Career of Robert T. Bapst, 1880-1959", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1994.

<sup>34</sup>Marty Butt, "Biography of Pragmatic Visionaries", unpublished ED.D dissertation, University of La Verne, 1993.



## Design of the Study

### Primary Sources

Sources for a project such as this were rich and varied, not the least of which was the opportunity to personally interview W.H. Swift himself, his son Glenn, and others who knew him. Regretfully, because of illness prior to her passing, Mary Swift was not available for interviews. Other primary sources readily available at the Provincial Archives of Alberta were those originating with the Department of Education, for example the Deputy Minister's papers covering the years 1946-1964. Unfortunately, the papers covering this period do not differentiate between the Deputy Minister and the Minister and so had to be sorted through. The Annual Reports of the Department of Education for the Province of Alberta were also a valuable source as they contained a great deal of Swift's input during the period of his tenure as Deputy Minister. Another useful resource were the yearbooks of the Camrose, Calgary, and Edmonton Normal Schools for the periods in which he was involved both as instructor and, in the case of Calgary, as principal. The repository for the above is also the Provincial Archives, however Swift's private collection was also valuable in this regard.

Further avenues for exploration proved to be documents pertaining to the Education Society of Edmonton and the

Canadian Education Association. He was an active participant in both of these organizations and, in fact, served as president of the latter. For the case study dealing with the Atlee-Jenner dispute, the Cyprus Hills Divisional Records found at the Calgary-Glenbow Archives were extremely useful. A detailed newspaper and periodical search was also undertaken both as a source on Swift and to help place his actions and thought in the context of the times. In this regard, the M.Ed thesis of Walter H. Worth was of invaluable assistance.<sup>35</sup> The study determined the nature and volume of editorial comment on education in Alberta. It featured an analysis of virtually every editorial on education appearing in the six daily newspapers of the province during the five year period from January 1, 1946 to December 31, 1950.

Possibly the most valuable primary source available, save the personal interviews, was the abundance of autobiographical information written, in a raw and unedited form, in the style of a diary or memoir, by Swift himself. This material was released by Dr. Swift for use in the production of the proposed dissertation. Hopefully this material will somewhat offset the unfortunate reality that Swift's own collection of personal papers has long since vanished.

Finally, the subject's own published works were analyzed. These included the autobiography edited by Chalmers, and the

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<sup>35</sup>Walter H. Worth, "An Analysis of the Treatment of Education in the Alberta Press", Unpublished M.Ed. Thesis, University of Alberta, 1952.

books, Trends in Canadian Education, (1958), Educational Administration in Canada, (1970), and his doctoral dissertation from Stanford University completed in 1942.<sup>36</sup> The thesis dealt with the application of the methods of gestalt psychology in an educational context.

#### Format of Interviews and Some Comments on Methodology

The general methodology consisted, first of all, of a review by the investigator of documents pertinent to the topics to be discussed. General questions were then developed and provided to the subject approximately a week in advance so that he might give some consideration to the subject matter to be considered. During the interview process, these questions served only as a general framework from which natural discussion based upon a stream of consciousness usually manifested itself. The tape recorded conversations were then transcribed.

The great challenge in this endeavour was to meld together oral material with the documentary evidence. In this regard, Hoffman's suggestions regarding the validation of evidence collected during the interview process was important

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<sup>36</sup>W.H. Swift, Trends in Canadian Education, (Saskatoon: Quance Lectureship Committee, 1958); Educational Administration in Canada: A Memorial to A.W. Reeves, ((Toronto: The MacMillan Company of Canada Limited, 1970); "A Comparative Study of Two Methods of Presentation by Wholes of Materials to be Learned", (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1942).

to keep in mind. She pointed out that an oral report's validity cannot really be tested unless it can be measured against some body of evidence. Without such evidence, she argued, it simply becomes a "bit of esoterica."<sup>37</sup> However, as invaluable as such hard and fast rules may be when reconstructing the "official story", it is only through the kind of in-depth conversation with a subject, of a sort that often cannot be corroborated, that a real life can be written and understood. For it is here that the true nuances of an individual's personality shine through the haze constructed by the "official" persona. Once again, in the final analysis, oral history is simply one among several primary resources available to the historian.

Finally the question of the historian's objectivity must be addressed. While it cannot seriously be argued that it is possible for total objectivity to exist in the writing of any historical endeavour, much less for anyone contemplating writing a biography, it may be possible to dilute somewhat the effects of bias on the part of the interviewer in the oral historical setting. In this regard the work of Hodysh and McIntosh was enlightening. According to their definition,, oral history might be defined as "the description and explanation of the recent past by means of life histories or

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<sup>37</sup>Alice Hoffman, "Reliability and Validity in Oral History", in Dunaway and Baum, eds., Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology, (American Association for State and Local History, 1984), 70-71.

personal recollections where informants speak about their own experiences."<sup>38</sup>

Hodysh and McIntosh, in fact, dealt with the post 1945 period and the idea that, since the historian may often be able to make use of oral history in his or her research endeavors, "it may suggest other avenues to be explored and new interpretations of the past."<sup>39</sup> One particular approach, they argued, might be an exploration of the possibilities of objectivity in the "description and explanation of events."<sup>40</sup> Given the above, would it be possible to distinguish the criteria by which such objectivity is to be measured, "especially if those criteria are subject to the historian's conceptual framework and perception of events?"<sup>41</sup> Using the example of the way educational leadership emerged in Alberta from 1945-1970, they pointed out that in the study of objectivity in oral history two aspects of methodology ought to be singled out for attention:

First, the historian should be aware of the values and assumptions that inform his or her personal perspective on history and, more particularly, the models employed in historical research . . . . Where possible, the recollections of oral history should be employed in concert with documentary

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<sup>38</sup>Henry W. Hodysh; R. Gordon McIntosh, "Problems of Objectivity in Oral History", Historical Studies in Education, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 1989), pp. 137-146), 137.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 138.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 138.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 138.

evidence . . . . Second, the historian's use of general and specific hypotheses should only be taken as guides in the framing of oral history data.<sup>42</sup>

Selectivity would also play an important role in this undertaking. Hodysh and MacIntosh asserted that if the key to an understanding of objectivity in an oral history centres on questions pertaining to the selection of data, "then it would be necessary not only to identify methodological concerns about the reconstruction of events but, as a point of reference, to provide a brief description of the existential conditions during the period under investigation."<sup>43</sup> In other words, it is not only the life histories and personal recollections of the historical actors that is of concern, but also the various techniques utilized by the historian to achieve historical knowledge. This latter consideration may be dictated on an unconscious level by the "cultural baggage that shapes the intellectual framework or paradigm that guides the selection of evidence."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 145.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 138.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 138-140.

### Conceptualization of Chapter Presentation

The biography is presented in a chronological fashion by era. Chapter two will examine Swift's childhood. This includes anecdotes about family life and school in a rural setting. Next the chapter will deal with Dr. Swift's early experiences as an undergraduate at the University of Alberta and his teacher training at the Calgary Normal School. An important theme is introduced in this chapter which revolves around the idea of the role of Swift's early schooling, imbued as it was with British imperialistic notions, in the formation of his unique character. The chapter covers the period 1905 to 1930.

Chapter three concentrates on Swift's early experiences as a teacher and the beginning of his career in the civil service as a school inspector, eventually to be ensconced in the Athabasca Territory. The chapter also examines his experiences as an instructor at Olds College. Finally, it was during this period that Swift and Mary King were married, and, in the midst of the Great Depression, started their family with the birth of their first child. Once again, these experiences were to leave a lasting impression on Swift's personality. This chapter covers the period 1930 to 1935.

The fourth chapter deals with Bill Swift's career as an instructor in the Camrose and Edmonton Normal Schools and, eventually, as principal of Calgary Normal. This section also

focuses on Swift's graduate experiences at the University of Alberta and at Stanford. The chapter culminates with an examination of his tenure as Chief Inspector, and eventually Supervisor, of Schools for the Province of Alberta. These episodes encompass the approximate period 1936-1946.

Chapters five and six deal with W.H. Swift's career as Deputy Minister of Education through to his eventual retirement and post-retirement years. The former deals primarily with an examination of the office of Deputy, the theoretical responsibilities the position entailed, and Swift's style of administration. Chapter six examines several major issues which involved Swift in his position as Deputy and how he dealt with them. Included is an in-depth case study which examines the school closure debate at Atlee, Alberta, between 1957 and 1965. This was one of the last battles over the amalgamation of the school districts into the larger divisions, begun by the Social Credit Government prior to the Second World War. Chapter six ends with a discussion of Swift's career after his retirement and will cover the period 1946-1970.

Chapter seven examines Swift's educational thought as a philosophic backdrop to his life as an educator, writer, and educational policy-maker. The suggestion is made that Swift, through his behaviour and the ease with which he adapted to the senior bureaucratic "attitude" manifested in the upper echelons of the Province's Department of Education, might have



represented an example of the nineteenth century British civil service "tradition." The chapter also examines Swift's character and personality. It is argued that Swift represented an exemplar to his subordinates in the Department of education.

The concluding chapter sums up the significant events and Dr. Swift's major contributions in the field of education. It also offers suggestions regarding other possible avenues of research.

The proposed biography of W.H. Swift will, hopefully, do more than present the life of an eminent educator in chronological fashion. It also attempts to examine the intellectual and philosophical underpinnings of his educational thought and how it changed over time. It presents at least two key themes running throughout the work. The first centres on Swift's rapid rise through the ranks of Alberta's educational hierarchy. Swift held this in common with several other notable individuals who also made their mark in the higher echelons of Alberta's educational elite. These include those individuals identified by Hodysh and McIntosh: T.C. Byrne, Deputy Minister of Education (1966-1971); H.T. Coutts, Dean of Education, University of Alberta (1955-1971); S.C.T. Clarke, Executive Secretary of the Alberta Teachers' Association (1959-1969) and G.L. Mowat, Chairman of the Provincial Board of Post Secondary Education (1967-1968).<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Hodysh and McIntosh, 139.

Hodysh and McIntosh pointed out that they all had similar backgrounds:

All four grew up in rural or small-town Alberta. Three of them - Coutts, Byrne, and Mowat - received their early teacher education in Alberta normal schools, and all four completed their doctoral degrees at American institutions.<sup>46</sup>

Swift fits all the above criteria.

The biographical work also examines the similarities between Swift and his well known contemporaries, H.C. Newland, G.F. McNally, and M.E. LaZerte. An examination is made, for example, comparing the personal attributes each had which might have allowed them to rise to the heights they did in the educational institutions of the Province. The role organizations such as the Education Society of Edmonton had in forming the philosophical ideas they would eventually use to change the educational landscape of the province is also explored. This work also examines the idea that there was a kind of rhetoric that acted as "shorthand" for an underlying philosophy of education among those educators in Alberta that came of age in the mid-1930's.<sup>47</sup> Questions that may arise out of this investigation might be: Did an "official attitude" among senior bureaucrats exist, apart from the rank and file?

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 141.

<sup>47</sup>For more on this general idea, see Doug Owram, "Writing About Ideas", in John Schultz, ed. Writing About Canada: A Handbook for Modern Canadian History, (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1990).

If so, could this have represented a kind of paradigm?<sup>48</sup> Was it tied up with progressivism or perhaps an "old boys network" made up of those educators involved with the Social Credit movement in the mid-1930's and beyond? Finally, how did those who did not "buy the program", if indeed there was such a thing, fare?

Another theme, somewhat related to the foregoing, revolves around Swift's pragmatic point of view. This point of view allowed him to fit easily into increasingly greater roles of responsibility at a relatively young age. It also allowed him to be an excellent conciliator, adept at clearly detaching himself from the confusion of the moment, clearly delineating opposing positions, and eventually able to offer some compromise.<sup>49</sup> In a word, Swift had the perfect point of view for the senior bureaucratic position he eventually held.

Finally, another dimension to this endeavour concerned the analysis of Swift's character and style. It is asserted that Swift conformed to two models: an exemplar to his subordinates in the Department of Education; and one of the

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<sup>48</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962). Also Henry W. Hodysh explored the adaptation of Kuhn's paradigm as a way of understanding the shifts in educational policy; "A Note on History, Educational Policy, and the Uses of the Past"; The Alberta Journal of Educational Research, Vol. XXXVII, No. 4 (December, 1991), 323-332.

<sup>49</sup> See Chalmers, Schools of the Foothills Province, on A.T.A. mediation, 17. See also Owen G. Holmes, Come Hell Or High Water, (Lethbridge: The Lethbridge Herald, 1972), 58.

last examples of a typical civil servant in the nineteenth century British tradition. With regard to the former, apart from the aforementioned von Heyking thesis, David Hart's typology of the exemplar of virtue was useful as an aid to understanding.<sup>50</sup> Related to this, important ideas about those traits deemed significant to educators were gleaned from David Jones' recent collections, The Spirit of Teaching Excellence and Sayings For Teachers<sup>51</sup>.

With regard to the civil service tradition, the biography examines the connection between Swift and the "official attitude" of the senior civil servant. Swift, it is proposed, was one of the last examples of this "tradition." He represented continuity. As a template, of sorts, the nineteenth century model as represented in the work of Henry Taylor in his handbook for the British senior civil servant, The Statesman<sup>52</sup>, has been utilized. For example, Swift was a self-described pragmatist. This is the perfect criterion for the civil servant according to The Statesman. Why? The senior civil servant must be apolitical; theoretically, he or she serves the best interests of the public, not the political

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<sup>50</sup>David K. Hart, "The Moral Exemplar in an Organizational Society", in Terry L. Cooper and N. Dale Wright, Exemplary Public Administrators: Character and Leadership in Government, (San Francisco: Jossey - Bass Publishers, 1992).

<sup>51</sup>David C. Jones, ed., The Spirit of Teaching Excellence, (Calgary: Detselig, 1995); \_\_\_\_\_, Sayings For Teachers, (Calgary: Detselig, 1997).

<sup>52</sup>Henry Taylor, The Statesman, (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longman, 1836)

party. One in this position cannot afford to take a strong stance on issues. One must take the role of the "impartial umpire" as far as possible without jeopardising the interests of those who are your immediate superiors, in this case, the Minister of Education. One can't afford to make enemies. According to Taylor, this is the perfect civil servant: Knows all aspects of the field; is in no way radical, either in philosophy, politics or manner; possesses a strong background in administration; an industrious and efficient worker who is capable of making relatively quick, but informed, well thought out, decisions; able to make productive use of the expertise around him. This was Swift! It is shown that he demonstrated these traits early in his career. On the other hand, this was not H.C. Newland, the individual most often held to be the architect of the change to a more progressive curriculum within the Department of Education during the Social Credit era. Newland was a strong socialist and a staunch advocate of progressive education. These views were not universally popular among some educational administrators, particularly in the Normal Schools, Swift being one example. The dissertation will hopefully demonstrate that Swift in his tenure as an educator and as a senior civil servant helped provide a bridge which links one political administration to another. This perhaps provided a consistency upon which policy could be implemented. In his position as a senior civil servant, Swift helped provide the means with which to implement educational

change at the sharp end of the educational endeavour.

Swift, in his lifetime, took an active part in virtually every stage of public education in the province of Alberta. For historians of education, W.H. Swift's varied career provides a clear and comprehensive picture of the Province's educational system and its development up to and beyond his retirement as a public servant in 1966. It is hoped that this biography will provide a starting point for further inquiries into the structure of education bureaucracy and its policy-makers in Canada.

## CHAPTER II

### THERE'LL ALWAYS BE AN ENGLAND - AND A TOFIELD TOO: SWIFT'S CHILDHOOD AND EARLY EDUCATION

This chapter traces Swift's family origins through their migration from Central Canada to Edmonton in the, then, North West Territories. Swift's early school years are examined leading up to his undergraduate days at the University of Alberta and finally, his teacher training at the Calgary Normal School. A recurring leitmotif throughout this biography revolves around the issue of Swift's character and his idea of morality and virtue which were projected in this work. This chapter will introduce an analysis of the concept of Swift's character and the importance of his early educational experiences in its formation.

#### Family Background

Like most of us, Bill Swift realized too late that he "should have obtained from [his] parents greater knowledge of their ancestors."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, he admitted to knowing "little beyond [his] grandparents, and only sketchy matter about them."<sup>2</sup> To the best of his recollection, his father's "people" lived in the Eastern Townships of Quebec, which were originally English speaking. When they arrived was not known. According to Swift, "this was probably true of [his] paternal grandmother's people too."<sup>3</sup> Her surname was Herbert. This

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<sup>1</sup>W.H. Swift, Unpublished Memoirs, n.d.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

connection to the Eastern Townships was to remain throughout Swift's early childhood. He noted that, "when [he] was a boy, [the family] continued to receive a yearly supply of maple syrup from a Mason - a cousin residing . . . near Rawdon."<sup>4</sup> In any event his grandparents were married and eventually found themselves in Montreal where they opened a grocery store. Probably because "that was where the letters went to and came from", he recalled that the store was located at the corner of Fairmount and Waverley.<sup>5</sup> The marriage produced three boys in addition to Swift's father, William Charles; the others being George, Herbert, and Ashton, commonly called Bert.<sup>6</sup>

According to Swift, the early life of his mother, Eleanor Stockdill, was not pleasant. Her mother, Swift's maternal grandmother, died when Eleanor was about age 10. There were five children, Frederick, John, Eleanor, Aretia, and Charles. From what Swift could understand, his mother, in effect, became the family's housekeeper. Later, his grandfather married again, his second wife bringing at least one child to the family, who was known as "Aunt Annie."<sup>7</sup> Later, two more children were born, George and Alice. At some stage, Swift recalled, due to "family problems" his mother went to live

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.



with an aunt. This, according to Swift, "was not a happy time."<sup>8</sup> Between this period and his mother's arrival in Edmonton, the trail goes cold. Swift knew "little between then and my mother's coming to Edmonton, except that the family, or what was left of it at home, moved from London, where Mother was born, to Montreal West."<sup>9</sup>

Swift recalled that his Grandfather Stockdill worked for a lifetime with the Canadian Pacific Railway. He was a skilled carpenter and cabinet worker, doing the fine woodwork to be found in the early sleeping and dining cars. Swift knew him only after his retirement. At some time unknown to Swift, his second wife died and he married a third time, to a retired school teacher. Stockdill had a life-time pass on the CPR, and with it, the family managed to visit the Swifts at Tofield on several occasions. Swift remembered that his grandfather "was a kind, quiet, dignified man."<sup>10</sup> The three boys from the original marriage also worked for the railway, Charlie "achieving some prominence in the CPR hierarchy and having a siding in Saskatchewan named after him."<sup>11</sup>

Although the precise time and place of his parents' marriage was not known to Swift, it is known that his father

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

preceded his mother out West "in search of opportunity."<sup>12</sup> After stopping briefly in Winnipeg, he then made his way to Edmonton.<sup>13</sup> Swift surmised that, "this would be by way of Calgary by CPR and then to Strathcona, now south Edmonton."<sup>14</sup> Once in Edmonton, he was employed by Revillon Freres, wholesale and retail grocers, first as a clerk and later as a travelling salesman. Swift's mother followed, "probably in 1903."<sup>15</sup> Like many other recent arrivals, they lived in primitive conditions in this booming frontier town. In 1904, the year of Bill Swift's birth, Edmonton became a city with a population of some 8000 people, most of whom were very recent immigrants.<sup>16</sup>

Aspiring to a business of his own, Swift's father, in true Central Canadian petit bourgeois fashion, set about raising the necessary capital. According to Swift, while he was working for Revillon's, one of the early Edmonton "booms" was in progress, and lots were being bought and sold "all over the place,"<sup>17</sup> in far-flung new subdivisions. Swift senior bought a few lots on 109 street, just south of

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 10, 1994.

Jasper Avenue, "probably with only a down payment."<sup>18</sup> His father then, more or less immediately, sold them and made, what Swift described as "a reasonable profit."<sup>19</sup>

During this period, the whole area around Edmonton was still being homesteaded and hamlets and villages were starting or growing. Swift's father began scouting these areas for a place to start a business. On one of his tours he arrived at Tofield, consisting then of only a single store. Here, he was informed that a lumber yard was badly needed to serve the arriving settlers. "Although he didn't know a two by four from a piece of siding, he decided, with his real estate profits, to give it a try."<sup>20</sup> The business began operation, according to Swift, in 1906.<sup>21</sup> The previous year, on September 1, 1905, Alberta had become a province of Canada and Edmonton was chosen as its capital. Swift remembered being told that there was a great outdoor celebration with the Governor General and Prime Minister Sir Wilfred Laurier present. Swift, having been born the year previous, was present with his parents.<sup>22</sup> Family lore had it that Swift's "vocal behaviour was such that [they] had to withdraw from this gala

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>W.H. Swift, Unpublished Memoirs, n.d.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>W.H. Swift, Unpublished Memoirs, n.d.

event."<sup>23</sup>

In 1906, two years after making his decision to enter the lumber business, Swift's father moved the family to Tofield. Swift pointed out that this was a trip which, because of the lack of a proper road, and difficult terrain, took two days by horse drawn vehicle.<sup>24</sup>

The family first lived in a one room shack, "so small that during the day chairs were hung on hooks over the bed to release living space."<sup>25</sup> During this early period, lumber was transported from Wetaskiwin which, although farther away than Edmonton, could be reached by better roads and trails.<sup>26</sup>

Gradually, Swift's father had a combined office and living quarters built. Over time, other small businesses increased the size of the hamlet. Then, according to Swift, began a comedy of errors:

The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway was on its way. The location of the Tofield station was determined to be a mile or so northwest of the hamlet. That was where the town would be so businesses moved there, buildings and all, on surveyed lots. Then the GTP changed its routing to get its own lots to sell. When in 1909 the rails actually arrived the station was built three quarters of a mile south. Again everything had to move except for houses which remained where they had been built.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

With the location of the village finally settled, Swift's father had a fine large building erected to house mouldings and other building materials that required shelter from the weather.<sup>28</sup> According to Swift:

It is at this time that I begin to have my own memories. I remember the combined office and residence. The front was characteristic small town with the office door giving access to the wooden sidewalk. From the office, a door led to the combined kitchen and living quarters. Two bedrooms were upstairs. My most significant memory is of having my tonsils removed by Doctor Hammond, the kitchen table being the operating table and my father the anaesthetist. I still remember the strong sweet smell of the chloroform.<sup>29</sup>

The church was to remain important to Swift throughout his life. He taught Sunday school in his younger days and later in his career, became a part of the administration of various congregations of the United Church.<sup>30</sup> His father was an Anglican and his mother was a Baptist. He recalled that:

We lived in the little town of Tofield, population, between four and five hundred. There were three churches there. The Presbyterian, the Methodist and the Anglican. My father went to the Anglican, I went to church with him, mother didn't. It was a very small, very weak, congregation. I went to Sunday school in the mornings at the Presbyterian church with my Presbyterian pals and I went to Sunday school in the afternoon at the Anglican church with my Anglican pals. About 1923, as was happening all across Western Canada, particularly, and to some extent in the East, the Presbyterians and the Methodists were

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<sup>28</sup>W.H. Swift, Unpublished Memoirs, n.d.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, May 25, 1994.

joining. This was before the United Church was in existence. In any case, they began to join, usually calling themselves the 'Union Church'. This happened in Tofield. Now all three of the congregations had been receiving 'mission money' from Eastern Canada or from England. My father said, 'this is absurd, this town could support one good church and finance it itself and we wouldn't be using mission money'. And so, with much soul searching, I'm sure, he left the Anglican Church and joined the Union Church which in due course became the United Church.<sup>31</sup>

Swift had one sister, Anne, and two brothers, John and Arnold. There was a wide age discrepancy between them. Swift was sixteen years older than Arnold. Arnold took over the family business after he came out of the Air Force. The Swift business operated in Tofield for over sixty years. Bill Swift's brother John went to university and became a chemical engineer, eventually retiring as Head of the Fertilizer Plant at Cominco in Kimberley, British Columbia.

Swift's sister, Anne, first became a teacher, "but didn't like it, [for which he didn't blame her], what with teaching in rural schools." She later become a nurse and trained at the Royal Alexandra Hospital. Subsequently, she went to Toronto for a year of graduate work, although she didn't have an undergraduate university degree. Upon completion, she came back to the Royal Alexandra Hospital where she served as an instructor of nursing, until she retired.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 10, 1994.

## Early Education

Although claiming to "remember remarkably little about [his] pre-High School days"<sup>33</sup>, Swift's observations on the subject proved to be quite extensive. He apparently had no difficulty going through school - he skipped grades twice.

A four room brick school had been built at townsite number two and it was in it that Swift began his formal educational experience. Shortly thereafter, noted Swift, as the village grew into a small town, another single room was provided a block away, which accommodated grades I and II. "The grading then became I and II, III and IV, V and VI, VII and VIII, and IX, X, and XI."<sup>34</sup> This remained the pattern for many years. Swift pointed out that, at that time, grade one pupils were accepted not only at the beginning of the regular school year but also at Christmas and Easter. He remembered that he:

. . . entered at Easter. My teacher was Miss Reith. The three times a year admission of grade 1 pupils must have created a problem for the teachers at the end of the school year. However, by the end of June, I had done well enough that I was able to enter Grade II at the beginning of the next school year, even having had only three months in Grade I. Of course, bear in mind that I was sitting in a classroom that not only had Grade I, but had Grade II, and so I would be listening in on the Grade II teaching, and so on. In any event I was

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<sup>33</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 10, 1994.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

promoted to grade II which I entered when school opened in the fall.<sup>35</sup>

This scenario was to repeat itself in later years when Swift was promoted out of Grade VII into Grade VIII, and wrote the Grade VIII province-wide examinations. In actuality, when he graduated from Grade XI, which was the top grade at the Tofield school, he had to wait a year to get into university because he was only 14. At that time the University of Alberta accepted Grade XI Junior Matriculation. However, they would not accept students who were not yet 16.<sup>36</sup>

The presence of two grades to a room meant that a pupil could listen in on the lessons of the grade above and might be accelerated. According to Swift, "this happened to me with the result that I completed grade 8 at age 11. However, with my birthday being in August, I was 12 when I entered grade 9 and 14 when I entered grade 11."<sup>37</sup>

Swift recalled two events with particular satisfaction. The first was a visit by the Minister of Education, J.R.Boyle, and the second, his experiences with the School Cadet Corps:

There was a public gathering in the Variety Theatre. He [Boyle] presented book prizes to pupils in various grades. and I was a recipient. In my high school years we had a cadet corps, very small considering how few pupils there were. I was assigned the role of signaller, which involved the use of flags and the semaphore code. During World War 1 there was held

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.



a public meeting, also in Variety Theatre, in the interest of recruiting for the army. It was addressed by Private Peet, a professional travelling recruiter. The meeting was opened by me signalling from the platform Admiral Nelson's famous message to his fleet, 'England expects every man will do his duty'. The audience would not have been able to understand it but no doubt it was interpreted for them by the chairman.<sup>38</sup>

With regard to the latter, Swift noted that it was very much reflective of the British imperialistic sentiment then prevalent in Canada. He recalled that he was:

proud of the British navy. I was proud to look at a map of the world and see how much of it was coloured red. I sang Rule Britannia with gusto. I remember well the morning in 1910, I being six years old, when Mr. Younie, our school principal, lined us all up on the front walk and solemnly informed us that our King, Edward VII, had died and that we now had a new King, George V. This seemed to me to be almost a personal matter.<sup>39</sup>

In the years prior to World War I, society and the schools looked to Britain and the Empire for its ideals, be it for leadership, trade or for its heroes.<sup>40</sup> These attitudes had long been transplanted from the older, eastern provinces.

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<sup>38</sup>W.H. Swift, Unpublished Memoirs, n.d.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Nancy M. Sheehan, "Education, the Society and the Curriculum in Alberta, 1905-1980: An Overview", in Nancy M. Sheehan, J. Donald Wilson and David C. Jones, eds., Schools in the West, Essays in Canadian Educational History, (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Limited, 1986), 41. For a more general view of this Canadian imperialistic sentiment, see also, Carl Berger, The Sense of Power: Studies in the Idea of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970). Also related to settlement of the West and imperialism was Doug O'ram, Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

Since the established Anglo-Saxon\Anglo-Celt Protestant order felt that accepted British values may be under threat from the vast waves of non-anglo immigrants flooding into the West, it was thought that a concentrated effort towards assimilation was in order. The schools, for a start, seemed the perfect instrument with which to inculcate these British norms and values within the minds of the children of these "foreigners." D.J. Goggin, the first Superintendent of Schools in the North-West Territories, had solidified an imperialistic tone from the beginning. The program of studies, the textbooks and the atmosphere of the schools incorporated British values of loyalty, honesty, respect for authority and obedience.<sup>41</sup>

H.T. "Pete" Coutts, former Dean of Education at the University of Alberta, and one of Swift's Normal School classmates, had similar recollections about his school days in Ontario:

In all my school readers the frontispiece displayed a coloured picture of the Union Jack. There was no question about the monarchy. It meant more to us than the government of Ontario or the government of Canada . . . . While I didn't know who the Premier of Ontario was in those days, I knew who the King was: King George V by 1914.<sup>42</sup>

Von Heyking pointed out in her study of the development

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<sup>41</sup>Neil G. McDonald, "David J. Goggin: Promoter of National Schools", in David C. Jones, Nancy M. Sheehan and Robert M. Stamp eds., Shaping the Schools of the Canadian West, (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Limited, 1979), 14-27.

<sup>42</sup>H.W Hodysh and R.G. McIntosh, "Conversation With A Dean: The Life and Times of H.T. Coutts", Challenge in Educational Administration, The CSA Bulletin, (XXI, 4, 1982), 10.

of the social studies curriculum in early twentieth century Alberta, that the key to unanimity among Canadians according to virtually all textbook writers in this period was an allegiance to the British empire. This was not limited to the historic past, but was to continue to be a vital aspect of Canadian identity. According to Carl Berger, imperial-minded members of Canada's intelligentsia believed that the nation's history of material progress and the expansion of liberty could only be fully developed within a redefined and enhanced imperial federation.<sup>43</sup> Von Heyking pointed out that this intellectual elite was very successful in introducing its ideology into the Canadian educational systems.<sup>44</sup> The ideology was embedded in the school curriculum and revolved around three general themes: "the image of Canadian society as orderly and harmonious; a belief in material and spiritual progress; and, an emphasis on the membership of Canadians in the British Empire."<sup>45</sup> These three ideas, according to von Heyking, came together as a common theme in the curriculum of the period: "education for good character."<sup>46</sup> Schools tried to create students of virtue and gentlemanly conduct. In their understanding of good character, educators were

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<sup>43</sup>Carl Berger, A Sense of Power, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 109-119.

<sup>44</sup>von Heyking, 65

<sup>45</sup>von Heyking, 51.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 51

influenced by the tenets of philosophic idealism which saw service to others as the highest virtue and the best expression of Christian principles. "Educators of the period 1905 -1920 believed that preparing students for such service to the community was the key to continued social improvement."<sup>47</sup>

Swift enjoyed his early school experiences. He remembered playing marbles, "knife" and "pom pom pull-away."<sup>48</sup> Later, he recalled playing soccer, "but the balls in those days were leather and the stitches were forever coming loose or rotting out from playing in the wet. Then we would go for weeks without a ball to play with."<sup>49</sup> Regarding schoolyard games in general, Swift recalled that:

Every boy from about age 9 to about 12 or 13 had a marble bag with marbles of various sizes and values. Games involving rolling (shooting) the marbles were usually played "for keeps", that is, the winner kept the marbles, thus adding to his marble fortune. Prowess in straight shooting was greatly esteemed. Knife required a two bladed knife, both blades hinged at the same end. There were various games but all involved skill in causing the knife to land so that its handle did not touch the ground. These were very simple pastimes

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 51.

<sup>48</sup>W.H. Swift, Unpublished Memoirs, n.d. According to Morris Mott, even these harmless children's pastimes had imperialistic roots. See Morris Mott, "Confronting 'Modern' Problems Through Play: The Beginning of Physical Education in Manitoba's Public Schools, 1900-1915", in Nancy M. Sheehan, J. Donald Wilson and David C. Jones eds., Schools in the West: Essays in Canadian Educational History, (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Limited, 1986),

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

but were greatly enjoyed. As for baseball, in a small school there were not enough players to make two full teams so what was mostly played was "scrub." Each player progressed from left field through all the positions, eventually becoming batter. Some juggling of places had to be done from time to time depending on how many players were about or how many batters got on base.<sup>50</sup>

On the subject of his general deportment, Swift pointed out that he had no great problem in elementary school. On this note, he was quick to add that, to the best of his memory, "he never got the strap!"<sup>51</sup>

Swift received encouragement from his parents in his scholastic endeavours "but not in any vigorous or pushy way."<sup>52</sup> He recalled that:

My parents were always interested in my education. I understand that even before I went to school at age 5, I used to spend quite a bit of time in the office of the lumber operation that my father owned. The office was on the lower floor of the two storey building, the kitchen and dining room were behind, and upstairs, were the bedrooms. Again, I think I remember this from being told, but at about age 5, when business was slow, particularly during the winter, my father spent quite a bit of time teaching me various things about reading books and maps and what have you.<sup>53</sup>

Lessons such as these would, undoubtedly, leave a lasting impression on Bill Swift. They would help shape, not only his

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 10, 1994.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

educational thought and his eventual attitude toward public service, but his outlook on morality and fair play. They would form a major part of the foundation upon which his unique character and personality would be built.

### Character, Virtue and Schooling on the Prairies

As philosopher Nancy Sherman wrote in 1989, "having character requires the integration of different ends and interests in a unified life over time."<sup>54</sup> That is, ethical deliberation should not simply focus on the achievement of a specific end at one time and another at some other time, rather there should be a lifetime of unity, of consistency.<sup>55</sup> Inextricably bound with this concept are also notions concerning morality and virtue.

Going back to Aristotle, the virtues comprised just and decent ways of living as a social being. Sherman pointed out that excellences of character for Aristotle included more than those we would likely think of as moral, such as benevolence and good will. They encompassed traits like wit and good humour that are essential to a whole life among other human beings in a political community. "Moral thought and conduct are only one aspect of the balanced, integrated and well-

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<sup>54</sup>Nancy Sherman, The Fabric of Character: Aristotle's Theory of Virtue, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 6.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 6.

rounded life of the virtuous person."<sup>56</sup> In Aristotelian terms, virtues were acquired character traits that included the full range of human faculties - dispositions to think, act and feel in certain ways. Thus, virtues were the cultivated traits, "the attitudes, sensibilities, and beliefs that affect how a person sees, acts and . . . lives."<sup>57</sup>

Christian thought in the Middle Ages placed its own stamp on the Aristotelian tradition. In the theology of Thomas Aquinas, the meaning of virtue betrayed its earlier roots but was adapted to Christian concepts of a cosmic divine order as the end toward which life should be directed. According to Cooper, character traits that served to shape life in accordance with that order were formulated in terms of four traditional cardinal virtues, prudence, justice, temperance and courage. These went back to Plato and were eventually carried into the doctrine of the Church. Added to these were the three supernatural or theological virtues, faith, hope, and love, which reflected Christianity's ultimate concern for the life of faith.<sup>58</sup>

Moving into the modern era, the concept had fragmented into a variety of understandings. According to Cooper, by the early 18th century, "virtue was often seen as little more than

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 103.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>58</sup>Terry L. Cooper, "On Virtue", in Terry L. Cooper and N. Dale Wright, eds., Exemplary Public Administrators, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992, 3.

a notion of good breeding, with good humour and natural kindness as the central desired qualities."<sup>59</sup> He pointed to a tendency during that time for virtue to shift from the plural, referring to specific traits such as prudence, fairness, and so on, to the singular, becoming almost synonymous with moral. Furthermore, with a loss of a coherent ultimate end, either in the Aristotelian or the Christian sense, virtue increasingly became an end in itself. A widely held perspective on virtue during the 17th and 18th centuries was influenced by the philosophy of David Hume, which viewed individuals as driven by passion and self interest. It tended to refer to virtue in the simplified and homogenized singular rather than the previously common plural. "Instead of specific character traits, virtue became synonymous with a disposition to obey laws or rules of morality."<sup>60</sup>

Drawing on the earlier work of A.B. McKillop,<sup>61</sup> von Heyking pointed out that schools, of Swift's era, "were driven by the commitment to create good citizens, meaning good people."<sup>62</sup> Good citizenship, and with it, concepts of personal virtue, were defined by the notion of disciplined character. "Though not defined in explicitly Christian terms,

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>61</sup>A.B. McKillop, A Disciplined Intelligence, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987).

<sup>62</sup>von Heyking, 83.



educators sought to create people of good character, with a commitment to service as determined by the tenets of philosophic idealism."<sup>63</sup> According to Ross, the fundamental assumption of this Canadian idealist point of view was that "there existed a correspondence between the moral and aesthetic content of the highest human thought and the imminent purposes of the universe."<sup>64</sup> Ross further argued that the essential nature of idealism in the Canadian context, was the "importance placed on both a knowledge of both the classical and the Judeo-Christian tradition, along with the literary expression of these concepts and ideals in the history of the English speaking people."<sup>65</sup>

The extent to which "good citizenship" was equated with "good character" was identified, according to von Heyking's research, by the speakers at the National Conference on Character Education, held in Winnipeg in October, 1919. In his opening address, Sir James Atkins, the Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba, outlined the aims of schooling and thereby described the student of "good character:"

The test of all theories of educational reform, and of all teaching efforts and institutions is, do they produce individual worth, do they induce the children to sit governed in the fiery prime of

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 83.

<sup>64</sup>Campbell Ross, "The Neatby Debate in Alberta", in N. Kach and K. Mazurek, eds., Exploring Our Educational Past: Schooling in the Northwest Territories and Alberta, (Calgary: Detselig, 1992), 182.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 182.

youth, obedient at the feet of law', do they make the citizen self-reliant, enterprising, equal to his own emergency, and of undoubted integrity, a sincere worshipper of God and a lover of his fellow man?<sup>66</sup>

According to von Heyking, those involved with education agreed with these sentiments. Teaching methods texts pointed out the teacher's responsibility for inculcating patriotism and explained the connection between civic and personal virtue.<sup>67</sup> The true patriot was, "honest in his dealings with all men, gives his share of time and his influence to secure good men for public office, regards his vote as a sacred trust, has due respect for our laws and obeys them, does not shirk public duty, and if elected to office administers the affairs of his office in the interests of the people."<sup>68</sup>

### The First World War

The First World War had a very significant effect on Swift's life. He was not quite ten when War broke out but he took a keen interest in it. This was before the coming of radio and even long distance telephone was in its infancy. Information crossed the country by way of the telegraph

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<sup>66</sup>von Heyking, 73-74. It is interesting that these remarks would have been made in the aftermath of the Winnipeg General Strike, that same year, in which the authorities, siding with the business community, brutally suppressed the attempts by unskilled workers to bargain collectively. Labelled as "Bolshevik revolutionaries", many non-British strikers were jailed and/or deported.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 74.

<sup>68</sup>von Heyking, 74.

services, in the morse code, of the railways. Information was received in Tofield by way of the Edmonton Bulletin which came by train a day late.<sup>69</sup>

Swift recalled with clarity the first day of school in late August of 1914:

. . . the principal, Mr. Popplestoner, an Englishman, crowded those of us in upper grades into the senior room and told us about the war, using maps and the blackboard. He told us who the belligerents were, as of that time, and of their relationships to each other, the Triple Alliance, the Triple Entente, the overrun Belgium, the Balkans, and all such detail. He listed the underlying causes, Germany's lack of colonies, the growth of militarism, and the long-standing enmities. He told of the assassinations at Sarajevo, the ultimatum to Serbia and all the subsequent involvements. It was a grand lesson. He went on to tell us that war involved death, destruction and misery. Strangely, I remember him referring to the "debris" that would result in the fields of battle.<sup>70</sup>

John Herd Thompson confirmed the role of the schools in creating support for the war effort. He noted that the schools were used to remind students and their parents of the justice of the cause and their duty to the Empire. Through the singing of patriotic songs, the production of special plays and participation in war-time essay contests, public schools contributed to the creation of a national, and by implication, imperial feeling.<sup>71</sup> Swift's personal involvement in the war occurred in 1917 while he was still 12 years old.

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>John Herd Thompson, The Harvests of War, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), 39-43.

He became what was then referred to as a "Soldier of the Soil."

In 1917 the war was going badly. Farming was very labour intensive and farm labour was short, many men being in the army. School boys were released from school on May 1 and worked on farms until October 1. Swift was taken on at the Jacobs farm. The Jacobs family consisted of the father and son, their wives, and, as of then one toddler. Swift became the chore boy:

moving hay down from the loft, putting grain in the feed boxes, taking cows to and from the pasture, mixing pig food for 100 hogs, cleaned the horse and cow barns, kept the kitchen supplied with wood, milked a few cows, fed calves from a pail.<sup>72</sup>

There seemed, to young Bill Swift, no end to the tasks. "We went to the barns before 6:00 a.m., came in for breakfast, then proceeded to the various aspects of the day's work."<sup>73</sup> Supper came about 6.00, after which they would finish the chores until about 7.30. Swift had very little time to himself. Nevertheless, he returned to the Jacobs farm the next year, taking on tasks of greater responsibility. He looked back upon this farm experience with much satisfaction. "It was hard work but I learned much."<sup>74</sup>

Bill Swift turned 15 in August of 1919. Since he was too

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<sup>72</sup>W.H. Swift, Unpublished Memoirs, n.d.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>W.H. Swift, Unpublished Memoirs, n.d.

young to be admitted to the University of Alberta, a role for which he had been preordained by his parents, he was forced to wait out a year. During that year he continued working on the Jacobs' farm and arrangements were made that he should be allowed to go back to school to put in time during some of the winter months. "I suppose I could have been sent somewhere for grade XII but this was not done, nor were high school correspondence courses available at that time in Alberta."<sup>75</sup>

During Swift's teen years he became involved in the Tuxis Parliament. This organization, which still exists as of this writing, gave young people experience in public speaking and debate by way of a model parliament. According to Swift:

there was organized in one of the churches a Tuxis square, a bit like boy scouts but with a more solid church connection. In 1920 there was held in Edmonton the first Tuxis Parliament. I was sent, during Christmas holidays, as a member from Tofield. I continued to be a member for some years eventually becoming Premier, and Speaker.<sup>76</sup>

He pointed out that it was a "great experience" for him and was "instrumental in developing such public speaking capacity as [he] had and used so much in later years."<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>W.H. Swift, Unpublished Memoirs, n.d.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

### Undergraduate and Normal School Training

In September, 1920 Swift entered the University of Alberta. Accompanied by his father, he travelled to Edmonton to register. Eventually, he secured a room on the top floor of what was to become St. Stephen's College. This proved to be a positive choice. He noted that he was then quite immature, "younger than most students, many of whom were First World War veterans, and a bit overwhelmed by it all."<sup>78</sup> In St. Stephen's (or Alberta College South as it was then called), Swift found a congeniality that helped him immensely during these early years. Swift was to remain there for all four of his Arts degree years, and later also for two graduate years.

Student life agreed with Bill Swift. Active in student affairs, he became a member of the students' council taking on the role of Chairman of the House Committee, a student self-discipline body.<sup>79</sup> The University of Alberta had an enrolment of roughly a thousand students at that time. According to Swift, "this was a size such that while one did not get to know all students personally, most were at least familiar by sight."<sup>80</sup> Similarly, almost all the staff were known by

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<sup>78</sup>W.H. Swift, The University and I, unpublished manuscript, University of Alberta Archives, 1981., 1.

<sup>79</sup>W.H. Swift, unpublished memoirs, n.d.

<sup>80</sup>W.H. Swift, The University and I, 1.

sight.<sup>81</sup> However, academically, like many students, his early university years were marked by a lack of direction and, thus, intrinsic motivation. Finally, however, he decided to pursue teaching as a career. Swift recalled that "he had no idea why [he] was at university, it was just more school."<sup>82</sup> He was not highly motivated. It was at the beginning of his third year that he decided to embrace teaching. At that time, this decision meant finishing his Arts degree and then going to Normal School. He recalled that he:

. . . took the available psychology courses in third and fourth years. I failed no courses during my four years but my total scores were not really impressive. My Arts program was quite a hodge-podge but met the requirements.<sup>83</sup>

Swift could remember receiving only one honour during his university years. At the end of his first term, he entered a special "problems" test competition which was open to freshmen in math. To his surprise, he won the competition. At convocation in 1921, the book prize was awarded, "my parents being present to watch."<sup>84</sup>

One of Bill Swift's future strengths would be the ability to analyze problems and make "the system" work, be it for the individual or the institution. As this anecdote clearly illustrates, this ability got an early start:

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 1.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

All first year students were required to take physical exercises twice a week. I learned shortly that by joining the C.O.T.C., the Canadian Officers Training Corps, one could get a few cents per parade and also get credit for physical exercises. Soon I learned that there was also a C.O.T.C. band and since I had been in the Tofield boys' band, playing baritone, I presented myself and was admitted. So in the end I got physical exercises credit for playing in the band.<sup>85</sup>

In his decision to pursue teaching as a career, Swift was greatly influenced by Sam Laycock who taught at St. Stephen's College where Swift roomed. Ultimately, Laycock became the Dean of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. Thereafter, Swift adjusted his courses for the fourth year of his Arts degree to lead him into education. After graduating, he then went to Normal School, this being the only route to teaching available at that time in Alberta.<sup>86</sup>

When queried in 1994 as to what his parents thought of his decision to enter a profession not particularly highly thought of by the standards of the day, Swift maintained that:

I don't think they ever indicated to me whether they were pleased or not. Certainly no exception was taken to it. My father had to finance me, or largely finance me, to go to Normal school. In fact, he had financed me a great deal at university. I worked during the summers, although one didn't earn a great deal. Of course, it wasn't nearly as expensive to go to university as it later became, the fees were quite low. As far as I can say, my parents accepted my decision to be a teacher. Therefore, even though teaching didn't rank very high in those days, in terms of

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

<sup>86</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 10, 1994.



prestige or salary, I went ahead with it.<sup>87</sup>

Swift was one of the relatively few who, at that time, started their teaching career with a university degree. Almost all teachers started with one year of Normal School. However, Swift had a B.A. and eventually, also a certificate, with honours, from the Calgary Normal School.<sup>88</sup> He concluded that, "having a degree meant I had no difficulty getting a job."<sup>89</sup>

According to Swift, the program in which he enrolled, was for those with degrees and was only offered at the Calgary Normal School. Swift recalled of the experience:

We were a class of about 20. At that time, university graduates were only required to attend from the first of January until the end of May. So I only really went part of a year, but I enjoyed it very much. [It was] one of the happiest years of my life. I sang, with my limited vocal capacities in an operetta and I became editor of the Yearbook. This would have been 1924-25.<sup>90</sup>

He noted that it was in the Normal School that he "really found himself"; that he came out "knowing exactly" what he wanted to do.<sup>91</sup> Swift knew the value of involvement and participation. Although, as evidenced earlier, he was not a great athlete, he was a member of the Glee Club and,

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

<sup>90</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 10, 1994.

<sup>91</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, May 27, 1996.

according to the Calgary Normal School Yearbook of 1924-25, played the part of "Larry" and "Chicot" in the "Bells of Beaujolais."<sup>92</sup> Obviously, he was able to make his mark. Donald Dickie, then a staff member at Calgary, wrote of Swift: "His talent, energy, and administrative ability promise a worthwhile future."<sup>93</sup> This was a description of Bill Swift that would follow him throughout his career.

It was no small feat to stand out from the rest of the class of 1924-25, for it was an esteemed group in its own right. Years later, Swift made a list of the graduates of his "extraordinary"<sup>94</sup> class at the Calgary Normal School. Some of these included: Eric Ansley - General Secretary of the Alberta Teachers' Association; Pete Coutts - Dean of the Faculty of Education, University of Alberta; Archie Evenson, Associate Director of Curriculum, Edmonton Public School Board; Doug Harkness - M.P., Minister of Defence; George Stanley - Lt. Governor of New Brunswick; Ted Hinman - Provincial Treasurer; Theo Finn - Associate Dean of Education, University of Calgary; Lawrence Bussard - Superintendent, Lethbridge Public School Board; Ken Argue - Professor of Education; plus many more who went on to become successful

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<sup>92</sup>Calgary Normal School Yearbook, 1924-1925. W.H. Swift collection. 25.

<sup>93</sup>Calgary Normal School Yearbook, 1924-1925. W.H. Swift collection. 15.

<sup>94</sup>Personal interview, W.H. Swift, May 27, 1996.

teachers.<sup>95</sup> Obviously, Swift's class was an anomaly, as it seems to be at odds with the results of Patterson's research in his "History of Teacher Education in Alberta."<sup>96</sup> Patterson contended that the pattern in teacher education in Alberta has been one of low entrance requirements for admission to teacher education programs. He noted that between the years 1920-24, Swift's period, students were accepted with a number of deficiencies in their high school courses, on the condition that they did special academic work during the normal school term to make them up. The standards were of such a quality that E.W. Coffin, Swift's Calgary Normal School principal, observed in 1923 that: "we shall have to look to our standards if the cumulative effects of slipshod work, particularly in English, are not to leave their disastrous blight on our elementary schools!"<sup>97</sup> There can be no doubt, however, that Swift's group was an exceptional one, many of whom would help dominate the educational administrative patriarchy in the West for years to come. It is also striking that so few of these obviously talented men stayed within the teaching ranks for any significant period of time, quickly moving up into the administrative ranks. This has been a problem within the

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<sup>95</sup>W.H. Swift, Unpublished autobiographical material, n.d.

<sup>96</sup>Robert S. Patterson, "The History of Teacher Education in Alberta", in David C. Jones, Nancy M. Sheehan and Robert M. Stamp, eds., Shaping the Schools of the Canadian West, (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Limited, 1979), 192-207.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 196-197.

teaching profession, as a whole, since time immemorial. In the Yearbook under "epitaphs", Swift's simply read: "Native of Alberta, editor in chief - honours are his specialty!"<sup>98</sup>

When asked in 1996 about his teacher training in general and specifically whether or not he felt sufficiently prepared for the real world of the classroom, Swift pointed out that the key word in the process was "maturation:"

I think it prepared me, and this continued to be true in the Normal Schools, and I'm sure it is the case even now, that what it did for me was to provide a certain amount of, what I would call, maturation. I think that was the best thing that we did when I subsequently became a teacher and principal at the Normal Schools. This was not done by design, we didn't teach them a course in maturity or any thing like that. However, this is what happened. They would come in raw from the high schools and they would be considerably "grown up" by the time they left their year of Normal School.<sup>99</sup>

Along with that of course, there was a "considerable amount of review on subject matter and tips on how to teach this, that and the other."<sup>100</sup> A lot of emphasis then, was put on the curriculum itself, a review of the curriculum, and some pedagogical techniques. According to Swift:

There was, of course, our practice teaching. My practice teaching, being a graduate, was chiefly done in the high schools of Calgary. All of these things contributed to some degree of preparation, but I'll have to admit that when I found myself in Provost, ready to

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<sup>98</sup>Calgary Normal School Yearbook, 1924-1925. W.H. Swift collection. 25.

<sup>99</sup>Personal interview, W.H. Swift, May 27, 1996.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

teach my first day at school, I did it with considerable misgiving. I wondered how I was going to get along. For a period of time, unfortunately, there were only two of us teaching High School, including Grade VIII, in Provost. The Principal was teaching the very subjects that I would have liked to have taught. So I had to take the other subjects. I had to do more work, by way of preparation, than I would have had I been doing the other subjects.<sup>101</sup>

Very little of what we would today describe as the "philosophy of education" was taught formally, according to Swift, "unless you include some of the teaching that was included in the psychology course."<sup>102</sup> The year that he went to Normal School, psychology was taught by Dr. Coffin, a veritable institution, who had been principal of Calgary Normal for nearly 30 years. A "very likable man"<sup>103</sup> whom Swift was eventually to succeed, Coffin's teaching style was somewhat relaxed. Swift described it as "kind of rambling", not as well structured as he would have liked.<sup>104</sup> There was nothing that one could call, "the philosophy of education."<sup>105</sup> In fact, Swift was at odds with the whole concept of a "philosophy of education" in a practical sense. According to a 1996 interview, Swift stated that:

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid.

Recently I got out a Year Book from one of the years that I was principal, and in it there [was] an [introduction] by Dr. Newland.<sup>106</sup> One thing he [stressed] in the message to the graduating students was that 'you should have a philosophy of education'. I think I have said this before, but this is a concept I find very difficult. I'm not aware that I have ever had, consciously, anything that I could call a 'philosophy' of life. Similarly with education. I don't think I had anything that I could have written out on two pages that said, 'this is my philosophy of education'!<sup>107</sup>

He argued that through the years, there had been many times when attempts had been made to analyze and to set forth the purposes of education. The problem was that no one could agree as to what belonged and what didn't. The result, according to Swift:

was that by the time the disparate groups of people that worked on this got their report made, they wanted almost everything in there. From soup to nuts! It all belongs in education. We went through this in Alberta. Once in our Curriculum Branch, after Mort Watts took over as Director of Curriculum, and then I suppose somewhat during the time we had the Cameron Commission on Education.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup>Swift was referring here to H.C. Newland, who, at that time, was Director of Curriculum for the Province of Alberta and could be described as the chief theoretician behind the Province's move toward a more "progressive" curriculum. Later in the text, a more complete analysis will be made of the relationship between he and Swift.

<sup>107</sup>Personal interview, W.H. Swift, May 27, 1996.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid. The Royal Commission on Education in Alberta, commonly known as the "Cameron Commission" was appointed in 1957 and tabled its report in 1959. This report will be discussed in greater detail later in this study.

By the fall of 1925, Swift had completed his undergraduate and Normal school training and was ready to embark on his career as an educator and, eventually, educational administrator extraordinaire. Lessons learned in his early schooling which were imbued with the notion of pride in the supremacy of the British Empire, idealistic concepts concerning the progress of mankind according to some unwritten plan, and ideas concerning fair play, morality and virtue, must have left a lasting impression. His experiences as a "soldier of the soil" and the lessons learned during his early home life imbued in him an ethic of hard work. His early university career helped refine an ability to analyze and work within a system. Finally, his experience in the Calgary Normal School gave him a purpose and a certain maturation which would help prepare him for his future endeavours. These would help shape, not only his educational thought and his eventual attitude toward public service, but his outlook on

morality and fair play. They would form a major part of the foundation upon which his unique character and personality could be built.



Chapter III  
A BATTERED SUITCASE AND A MODEL "A" COUPE:  
TEACHING AND INSPECTION ON THE FRONTIER

His early education complete, Swift was now ready to embark on his career as an educator. In this chapter, his relatively brief teaching career in the public schools is examined followed by the beginning of Swift's career in Alberta's educational bureaucracy, as a school inspector to 1935. This was a pivotal period in Swift's life. He married and started a family, having taken his post in the Athabasca Territory as a School Inspector, all in the midst of the Great Depression.

#### The Young Teacher

His Normal School "training" complete, Swift applied for and received a post at Provost, beginning in the Fall of 1925.<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, this was to be the only job Swift ever had to apply for in his entire educational career. According to Swift, the pay for a first year teacher in the 1920s was \$1400 a year, \$140 a month.<sup>2</sup> At that time, teachers were paid on a ten month year. That is, teachers received a tenth of their salary at the end of each month and were paid no salary

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<sup>1</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 17, 1994.

<sup>2</sup>This depended upon whether or not the individual held a first or second class certificate. The first class credential ranged from a low of 1676.09 in 1921 to 1688.89 in 1930-31. The second class declined as the 1920s went on, starting at 1504.89 in 1921 declining to 1176.03 in 1930-31. Salaries for women were substantially lower. These figures can be found in the Annual Reports for the Department of Education, Province of Alberta, 1921-1931.

in July or August.<sup>3</sup> Swift recalled that:

It was during the war . . . that the law was changed to provide that teachers would be paid on a year-round basis. I think it was decided by the teachers themselves, that it was better to have their salary paid in such a way that they got money during July and August. To the best of my recollection, there were no deductions for any purpose. There was no Teachers' Retirement Fund at that time, Workmen's Compensation did not exist at that time, [and there was] no deduction for Income Tax. I didn't pay Income Tax until I was at Athabasca. The first year I paid something less than a dollar.<sup>4</sup>

At Provost, he shared with the Principal, W.P. Wagner, the subjects of grades VIII to XI. Wagner would later go on to become Superintendent of Schools for the City of Edmonton. Swift noted that he had no memory as to how he got the job, assuming only "that it was advertised in the newspaper."<sup>5</sup> He speculated that the fact that he had a degree, which was not very common in those days, probably stood in his favour. Swift found it "tough going" for a time, often going to the school at 6.00 a.m. to prepare and then return to Mrs. Pearson's, where he boarded, for breakfast. While at Provost, he also found the time to coach a very successful girls' basketball team. "We travelled to various nearby places and usually won", he later recalled.<sup>6</sup> During this period, Swift still continued his university work part-time. He had

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<sup>3</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 17, 1994.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

attended the 1924 summer session but had to do term exercises and write the regular examination in the spring. It was a busy year.<sup>7</sup>

Towards the end of the school year he received an invitation from the Viking school board to come to a similar position "at \$1600 which was \$200 more than I was getting at Provost."<sup>8</sup> According to Swift:

I saw the Provost school board chairman and said I would stay if they met the Viking figure. I was told they could not do that so I entered into a contract at Viking. There Dewar McDougall was principal. We shared grades VIII to XI as I had done at Provost. It was a good year. I had good rapport with the students. There was an active young people's group at the United Church. We put on a play for public showing at the theatre, and took it to Daysland. I had gone to summer session [at the University of Alberta] again in 1926, two courses, and so was again working on term exercises, another busy year.<sup>9</sup>

During an interview in 1994, Swift expounded upon the differences in schooling in the 1920s in terms of curriculum and pedagogy in comparison with later years. He pointed out that there was greater rigidity and, later, more flexibility. According to Swift, rigidity simply meant that "the Department of Education issued its two or three booklets outlining what was the content of every course."<sup>10</sup> For every course, he continued, there was a prescribed text book and the teacher

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>W.H. Swift, Unpublished Memoirs, n.d.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 10, 1994.

would be required to use it. Teaching consisted of using the textbook and following the outline in the Department of Education Manual so that everybody throughout the province was teaching the same thing. Not necessarily in the same way, of course, "because, after all, the teachers, even then, would differ from one another with respect to their manner of presentation, their ability to use the blackboard, and so on."<sup>11</sup>

As an indication of flexibility versus rigidity, Swift gave the following examples:

At the Provost School, as had been the case when I went to school, when the bell rang, we all came and if the weather was fair, we lined up outside, Grade I, Grade II, and so on. Then we marched in all in line, we marched to our rooms and our desks. When I moved to Viking, they didn't have any such thing. When the bell rang, the kids just flocked into the school, helter skelter, and found their way to their seats. There was a bit more confusion to it. Now that was an indication that 'flexibility' was coming into the schools!<sup>12</sup>

He illustrated this in another way. In later years, there became a choice of textbooks rather than a single prescribed textbook. According to Swift:

Now there might be three prescribed textbooks and the teacher could use any one of them, although of course, the School Board played a part in that too. Because when they began to rent the textbooks, the School Board, after some consultation with the Principal, would decide how a school is going to use this book

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

rather than that book.<sup>13</sup>

In terms of his own teaching style, he noted that he did not model himself on anyone in particular. "I was fond of young people and my approach would be friendly and polite and so on, in the classroom."<sup>14</sup> He was quick to declare that he "never threw a piece of chalk or a blackboard brush at a child!"<sup>15</sup>

When asked about the issue of corporal punishment, he pointed out that he was not in favour of it and that he administered it "only once in my short teaching career."<sup>16</sup> This, presumably, occurred at Viking.

The boy concerned had been guilty of something or other I can't remember what. The teacher had taken the matter to the Principal, and for reasons that I don't know, the Principal assigned me to give the strap to this boy. He was a young teenager. I don't think he ever held it against me. I think we parted as friends. I don't remember any strapping being done at Provost, certainly not by me. Whether Wagner did, I simply don't recall.<sup>17</sup>

In summing up, Swift observed that he thought that "by and large, my pupils respected me on the one hand and at the same time were cordial toward me."<sup>18</sup> In a sense, this rather

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

lukewarm summation of his teaching career could be interpreted as a reflection of his ambivalence toward the act of teaching - "at the sharp end", or simply that the experience was so limited (only two years) that there was little else to deduce from it.

### Mary King and the Olds School of Agriculture

By spring Swift had decided to go back to the University of Alberta for graduate work. Despite the fact that there was no faculty of education at that time, there was a two year graduate degree called Bachelor of Education and he had saved enough money to finance a year. Bill Swift, even at this early stage in his career was obviously beginning to attract attention amongst the educational elite. Shortly after he had made his decision to return to the university, he was contacted by the principal of the Camrose Normal School offering him a position on the practice school staff.<sup>19</sup> "This was appealing", Swift remarked, "but I decided to continue with my original plan having the greater long range value."<sup>20</sup> He recalled:

That summer and into September I did farm work but took enough time off to attend the province-wide young people's camp at Sylvan Lake. The graduate year went well enough and I planned to look for a teaching job to earn money to come

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<sup>19</sup>W.H. Swift, Unpublished Memoirs, n.d.

<sup>20</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 10, 1994.

back in a year or two for the second graduate year. However, towards the end of the year Dr. McEachran, Head of Philosophy and Psychology, told me that he could find me a thousand dollar scholarship, if I came back immediately for year two. I accepted and made plans accordingly. A thousand dollars was enough to finance me for the seven months.<sup>21</sup>

In the fall he returned to university but was shortly called in to see Dr. McEachran again. He informed him that a crisis had suddenly developed at the Olds School of Agriculture. A teacher for Third Year, Grade 11, was needed the next week. The Deputy Minister of Agriculture had asked for help to find someone. Dr. McEachran said it would be a good experience for Swift and that his scholarship would be held for him to be taken up the next year.<sup>22</sup> According to Swift:

I went to see Mr. Craig, the Deputy Minister, and said that I would take the position providing I were given employment until the next September. I had known Mr. Craig slightly, from church, he being one of the mentors of Tuxis Parliament. My terms were met and so I accepted, and over the weekend I found myself teaching at the Olds School of Agriculture. That was a very interesting and useful year, both in my capacity as teacher and my capacity as Dean of the Dormitory. So I did . . . have another year of teaching, but not in the Public Schools. The Schools of Agriculture operated, not under the Department of Education but under the Department of Agriculture. This would be 1928-1929.<sup>23</sup>

This experience can be seen as illustrative of three

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>W.H. Swift, Unpublished Memoirs, n.d.

<sup>23</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 10, 1994.

important issues pertaining not only to Swift as an individual, but also to the scale of interpersonal relationships prevalent at the time. First of all it was a testament to the esteem Swift was already beginning to garner for himself within the educational community. Second, it is important not to discount the importance, particularly at that time, of casual interpersonal relationships arising out of the various social organizations important within the community, in this case the Tuxis Parliament sponsored by the United Church. Third, the relatively small scale of the provincial government bureaucracy, then in its infancy, is illustrated by the fact that a teacher with only two years experience could so easily be given an interview with the Deputy Minister of Agriculture.

At Olds, Swift chiefly taught three grade 11 subjects but also some English to first and second year students. In addition, he was also dean of the boys' portion of the residence, technically on duty twenty-four hours a day. According to Swift, "I had a two room suite, but no private bathroom, and was paid \$2200 a year. I felt rich!"<sup>24</sup> Taking advantage of his youthful appearance and energy, Swift had, on the whole, an enjoyable time at Olds. He recalled with some amusement that:

Being still quite young looking I was a member of the school basketball team, going to Calgary to play against the Institute of Technology.

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<sup>24</sup>W.H. Swift, Unpublished Memoirs, n.d.



My status as a member of staff was not revealed or suspected.<sup>25</sup>

The term ended in April. From then on, during the summer of 1929, Swift had a variety of jobs. He drove the school model T Ford to various farms telling about the School, trying to recruit prospective students. He took part in various conferences held during the summer, chiefly for farmers and farm women. He became recreation director for the School. Swift visited schools in the spring encouraging participation in school fairs, sponsored jointly by Education and Agriculture; he distributed garden seeds, "a pot-pourri of things, often with periods of little or nothing to do."<sup>26</sup>

According to Swift, "on or about August 1 there occurred an event of great import."<sup>27</sup> Mary King came from Saskatchewan to be an instructor in Home Economics. It was school fair time and she and Swift were two of the Olds School team of four judges. "Mary judged cooking, Anne Scott sewing, Mr. Norquay dealt with farm animals, I judged grains and vegetables and the regional school inspector judged the school work."<sup>28</sup> During much of August and well into September they visited many towns, villages and hamlets where the exhibits of children from the surrounding one-room schools were displayed

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

in skating rinks and other available facilities. In another of a continuing series of "crash courses", Swift noted that when he protested to Principal Grisdale that he was not competent to judge samples of wheat and other grains, Grisdale took him to the lab and gave him a quick course in comparing samples. About the vegetables Swift was entirely on his own:

What is the best carrot or potato? I never really knew but I got away with my decisions! As school fair judges we not only put on the required ribbons but after the doors were opened had to mount a box or whatever else was supplied and tell why various decisions were made. No one ever disputed my actions though there must have been some who wondered.<sup>29</sup>

These were the sorts of experiences which would help prepare Bill Swift for a future career in which expediency was given a high priority.

As they travelled from fair to fair in the College Ford, staying at varied hostelries, in Swift's words, "it came clear before too long that Mary and I regarded each other favourably."<sup>30</sup> Typically understating his private life, Swift noted: "At the stopping house at Raven a country dance in a nearby school house was advertised. I took Mary to our first dance. We were married July 4, 1931."<sup>31</sup>

As planned Bill Swift returned to the University of Alberta late in September and took the second year of his

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

program, which he completed in the Spring of 1930. During this time, he kept up correspondence with Mary. She came to Edmonton for one of the major university dances and he attended a similar affair at Olds near Christmas.<sup>32</sup>

The term progressed smoothly for Swift and it was also about this time that the School of Education came into being at the University of Alberta, offering a one year course to holders of bachelor's degrees. Upon completion, students would obtain a teaching certificate. One of Swift's assistantship duties was to observe practice lessons, reporting on the effectiveness of the prospective teacher.<sup>33</sup>

#### School Inspection on the Frontier

Toward the end of the 1930 term, Swift received a telephone call from Erica Humphreys, secretary to the Chief Inspector of Schools, whom he had known at summer camp.

She said Mr. Gorman would like to see me at his office. I went as requested. Mr. Gorman informed me that there had been no inspector of schools at Wainwright for many months. Someone was needed to go there for May and June to visit teachers in their first year of teaching. Could I go when my university term ended? I would be appointed to be an inspector of schools. I readily agreed to this.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

Once again this is perhaps illustrative of the relatively small world of the then nascent state of the provincial educational bureaucracy in the 1930s, a time in which personal contact held considerable sway. In any case, George Gorman was obviously pleased to have Swift on board, as his letter to A.G. Andrews, a Wainwright School Trustee attested:

The man selected is Mr. W.H. Swift, M.A., who has excellent academic background and who has considerable experience as a teacher [sic]. [ 2 years? ] . . . I am satisfied that you will like Mr. Swift and that you will find his work of a satisfactory kind.<sup>35</sup>

In due course Swift spent "a day" with Gorman in the Department of Education learning his trade, was given a battered suitcase turned in by the former inspector, and, in a few weeks, was on his way to Wainwright. Requiring a car for the job, Swift bought a 1929 "Model A Coupe" from his father, who was then a Ford dealer.<sup>36</sup> He then spent a busy two months visiting schools and attending to other matters. According to Swift:

One was expected to visit two schools a day, or if only one, to attend to some administrative problem in a second school district. Schools normally operated from 9:00 to 12:00 and from 1:00 to 3:30. Hence, the only time to visit secretary number one was during the noon hour and then for only a few minutes because the second school had to be reached

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<sup>35</sup>Correspondence, Gorman to A.G. Andrews, School Trustee, Wainwright, Alberta, April 17, 1930. P.A.A. Acc. No. 79.334, Box 28, File 634.

<sup>36</sup>W. H. Swift, Memoirs of a Frontier School Inspector, John W. Chalmers, ed., (Edmonton: Educational Society of Edmonton, 1986), 2.

by 1:00.<sup>37</sup>

Once again, the importance of building a network of personal contacts was critical, and Swift, very early in his career, recognized its significance. In his Memoirs of a Frontier School Inspector he wrote:

The visits to school secretaries were very important, especially from a public relations point of view, and not infrequently there was some concern on the part of the school board that was awaiting the visit of the inspector. To the inspector most of these concerns were of a trivial nature but not so to the board secretary, who often felt very much alone and neglected in the performing of their community roles.<sup>38</sup>

When the Wainwright job was finished, Gorman indicated to Swift that they were hoping to increase the staff of Inspectors of Schools by one the next September and that he thought that Swift would have a pretty good chance of being taken on.<sup>39</sup> However, according to Swift, "he couldn't offer it to me until it was actually approved. So, the Department gave me some work to do in connection with the marking of the Departmental Examinations over the summer."<sup>40</sup> However, as the summer went on, Swift heard nothing and so began looking for alternatives. He recalled that:

I scanned the papers and found that Lacombe needed a Principal. I applied for it and got the job. I notified Mr. Gorman's secretary that

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>39</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 17, 1994.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

I had taken this position. Within a day or two, I was called again by Gorman, who said, 'We are ready to offer you the position of Inspector of Schools in Athabasca'!<sup>41</sup>

So late in August in 1930, having had two years as a teacher and two months as a School Inspector, Bill Swift went on the full time staff. He was advised that a new inspectorate with headquarters at Athabasca was being formed to relieve those of Edmonton North, Peace River, St. Paul and indirectly, Grande Prairie. In these areas, homesteading was continuing and thus increasing the burden on already overtaxed school resources. Swift, unmarried and the junior member of the inspectorate, would preside over this sprawling new territory.<sup>42</sup>

Although it might seem as if Swift was the recipient of extreme good fortune, a case of being at the right place at the right time when opportunity knocked, it must be noted that this was not his only opening. Perhaps as a measure of the esteem in which he was held, Swift recalled that during his first graduate year he received a call to go to the office of the Deputy Minister of Education, John Ross:

He informed me that the Yukon Commissioner had asked him to recruit a teacher for the Dawson high school who would be in waiting to become Superintendent on the retirement of the incumbent. Yukon was sparsely populated then as compared with today. Dawson was still administrative

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid. For more in-depth detail on Swift's experiences as a School Inspector in the Athabasca territory, see his Memoirs of a Frontier School Inspector.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

headquarters. The Commissioner was supreme ruler there on behalf of Ottawa. The pay was good. Transportation, however, was slow and difficult. I considered this carefully but decided that I did not want to isolate myself. I have often thought in terms of what my life might have been or turned out had I accepted. For one thing I would not have met Mary.<sup>43</sup>

In late August, 1930, Bill Swift arrived in Athabasca and took up residence in the Grand Union Hotel. The inspectorate was a sprawling one, 250 miles from the western extremity of Lesser Slave Lake to Fork Lake 35 miles south-east of Lac la Biche. It went south from Athabasca 50 miles to Clyde and for a time had a string of school districts north of Westlock. In all of this area there was not a single mile of even gravel road. Much of it was on the fringes of settlement where trails served as roads.<sup>44</sup>

While the travelling was long and often difficult, and the work was never up-to-date Swift enjoyed the freedom to make his own plans and the variety of the kinds of work to be undertaken. Because Athabasca was a school division in its infancy, the job did not entail simply visiting schools day after day as in a fully developed inspectorate. Much time was devoted to organizing new school districts as settlement advanced at the fringes. It being the height of the great depression there was no funding available through debentures.

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

Schools were built of logs and very poorly equipped.<sup>45</sup> Swift recalled:

But when I went to Athabasca, it was just the beginning of the Depression. These new homestead areas were extremely poor. There was no possibility of them issuing debentures, they had no credit rating. As a result, we immediately got ourselves into the business of erecting log schools. The government gave a grant of \$250 to buy flooring, shingles, a door, some windows, a teacher's desk and one chair, a blackboard, and desks for the pupils, although, ultimately it got so bad that the children's desks were homemade.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, in many of the new districts, for one reason or another, there were not people competent to be school trustees. This is illustrated by the following correspondence between the Deputy Minister, J. Ross and Swift epitomising the expediency of the new frontier. In January of 1933, Swift wrote:

I would be glad of information regarding the procedure to be followed in the case of a protest [sic] of a candidate for election as trustee on the score [sic] of inability to read and write . . . I was informed during the election that one of the candidates was unable to read or write in any language. No formal protest was entered. The candidate was elected and at the time of his taking the declaration of office I questioned him on the point. He claimed to be able to read and write Ukrainian. I noted, however, that it was

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<sup>45</sup>According to Swift in his Memoirs, the log school-house era was a manifestation of the Depression. Prior to 1929, the usual procedure was that the newly established school district would arrange with the Department of Education, through its Debenture Branch, to market a twenty-year debenture for as much as a thousand dollars at the current rate of interest. The Department would find a buyer and then transfer the funds to the district for the building of the school. Swift, Memoirs, 9.

<sup>46</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, May 14, 1994.



with extreme difficulty that he signed his own name . . . , the signature was quite unintelligible.<sup>47</sup>

Ross replied:

. . . If the trustee referred to is able to read and write in the Ukrainian language, he is properly qualified for nomination as a trustee provided he holds the necessary qualifications. There is no prescribed test for testing a person's ability to read and write."<sup>48</sup>

In other words, if a person said he or she was literate in any language, and was voted in, that was good enough! As a result, throughout his time in the Athabasca inspectorate, he found himself the "official trustee" of a number of school districts, for which he did the secretarial work and took care of the assessment of tax rolls among other things.<sup>49</sup>

According to Swift:

There were various disputes from time to time and the School Inspector would have to go out and try and settle things. So the job varied over the province. In my Inspectorate, I found myself organizing my time . . . largely around the administrative problems and doing school inspecting as I went along, on the side so to speak.<sup>50</sup>

An analysis of the above and also archival material dating from the period of the Athabasca Inspectorate

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<sup>47</sup>Correspondence, Swift to J. Ross, January 20, 1933. P.A.A. Acc. No. 79.334, Box 28, File 634.

<sup>48</sup>Correspondence, J. Ross to Swift, January 24, 1933. P.A.A. Acc. No. 79.334, Box 28, File 634.

<sup>49</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, May 14, 1994.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

illustrates that Swift often took the initiative and proved adept in analyzing problems, distilling them down into their component parts, and then arriving at simple factors upon which to make a decision. This exercise in pragmatic - empirical problem solving represented a perfect training ground for a future senior civil servant! Often his reports would catch the attention of the Deputy Minister himself, J. Ross, or later, McNally, either bypassing or being sent on by George Gorman, the Chief Inspector of Schools. One classic example was Swift's description of the problem of financing in the new schools. As noted above, it seemed that since a new school did not have time to build up a solid financial footing due to the combination of a new tax base and previous taxes owed, they were never able to supply the school with the resources required. As a result, a system of priorities was arrived at allowing the board of trustees and the schools to build up a financial base from which to finance their operations. This set a series of correspondence in motion between Ross, Gorman, Swift and the Finance Department.<sup>51</sup> As Swift wrote to Gorman in March of 1932:

When the scheme for the erection of log schools by voluntary labour with government assistance was discussed a year ago, it was suggested that in addition to the initial grant of \$200 to provide materials . . . , that a further grant might be paid the second year of possibly \$50 to provide or assist with the provision of

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<sup>51</sup>Correspondence, Swift to Gorman, March 14, 1932; J. Ross to Swift, March 20, 1932. P.A.A. Acc. No. 79.334, Box 28, File 634.

necessary equipment or improvement of the school building. . . . Before making any recommendations for any of these districts I would be glad to know whether, considering the condition of the provincial treasury, it would be worthwhile doing so. In most of these schools there is a deficiency of equipment which the districts cannot hope to supply and keep in operation.<sup>52</sup>

To which Gorman replied:

. . . . I think it would be proper enough for you to submit one or two recommendations covering the case of those which you consider the most worthy or needy.<sup>53</sup>

Often, Swift's rural work ethic clashed with that of the civil servant, as shown in the following correspondence. Swift wrote to the Deputy Minister early on in his inspecting career suggesting that, since Willow Glen S.D. had just recently been added to his inspectorate and they required an immediate inspection, they "hold school some Saturday" so that he could fit it into his full schedule. He further enquired as to whether this would be regarded "as good policy by the Department and if done would I be justified in giving the following Monday as holiday in lieu of the Saturday?"<sup>54</sup> Ross replied, tempering Swift's enthusiasm with reality:

The Inspector of Schools has no authority to grant a holiday, but has the authority to ask the teacher to have his school in session on the Saturday forenoon, in order that inspection may be made. The

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<sup>52</sup>Correspondence, Swift to Gorman, March 14, 1932. P.A.A. Acc. No. 79.334, Box 28, File 634.

<sup>53</sup>Correspondence, Gorman to Swift, March 26, 1932. P.A.A. Acc. No. 79.334, Box 28, File 634.

<sup>54</sup>Correspondence, Swift to J. Ross, May 20, 1930. P.A.A. Acc. No. 79.334, Box 28, File 634.

work of an Inspector is strenuous, as he has not only to make an inspection of two schools per day if weather permits, but the writing of reports is a heavy burden. I do not think that it is advisable for you to do any inspection work on Saturday, even though a large number of the schools will not be inspected this term. If you have made any arrangements, the Department will approve them, but I would suggest that you do not undertake any special Saturday work.<sup>55</sup>

This was an attitude that Swift took with him throughout the rest of his days as a civil servant. In later years he made it a maxim that his work was never to follow him home.<sup>56</sup>

The vast majority of High Schools and other inspected schools in Swift's inspectorate were one-room schools. Swift noted that:

My largest school was in Athabasca which had four teachers, I had three teachers in Lac La Biche and there were two or three places where I had two teachers. All the rest were one teacher schools.<sup>57</sup>

Obviously, a large part of his job was the evaluation of teachers. When asked what constituted "good teaching", Swift felt that, for him, the measure had to be put in the context of the one-room school, since it was in that environment that most teachers outside the cities, found themselves.<sup>58</sup> For Swift, the first and most important thing, was for the teacher to be a good organizer.

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<sup>55</sup>Correspondence, J. Ross to Swift, May 23, 1930. P.A.A. Acc. No. 79.334, Box 28, File 634.

<sup>56</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, May 14, 1994.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

After all, he or she, usually she, would have Grades I-VIII, maybe one or another would be missing, but many of them were I-VIII or even I-IX. This took a great deal of organizing, not only to organize the teaching, according to a timetable, but organizing things for the children to do when they were not being taught, which was most of the time. This was the most difficult.<sup>59</sup>

Of course, individual personalities also had to be taken into account. Swift recalled that he had often wondered what the nature of that personality was, exactly:

For the life of me, I can't really describe it. You'd find a teacher with one kind of personality who had everything under control, was doing well, and seemed organized. Yet this was a very different person from somebody else who was also doing a good job of teaching! So the personality of the teacher and, particularly, the ability to develop rapport between the students and the teacher. This was a very important thing. If there was not good rapport between them, then it would be difficult, the pupils would be noisy, the teacher could not keep them under control. There were sad cases. I remember going to one school, French Canadian, forty children to teach in a one-room school up to Grade VIII. And [sic] a teacher there with a poor personality. But, in any event, with an impossible task! That school was just Bedlam! No discipline, no control, no order.<sup>60</sup>

A school had to be orderly. For Swift, that did not mean that there had to be rigid and tough discipline. However, there did "have to be order and reasonable quietness, children going about their work without bothering others, and so on."<sup>61</sup>

Obviously, there were a large number of teachers that

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

just could not make the grade. The School Inspector had to prepare a quadruplicate report with information about the teacher at the top, information about what had been observed and what classes had been tested, and so on.<sup>62</sup>

Then down in the corner, the place to put the 'X', 'excellent', 'very good', 'good', 'fairly good', 'fair' - there wasn't a line for 'no good'[sic]! However, many a time, I had to put in 'fair'. I wouldn't want to suggest that it was in the majority, but many a time.<sup>63</sup>

As well, the attrition rate among teachers was high, particularly among the men, according to Swift. Also, "of course among the women, because many of them got married. A goodly number of teachers married right in the district where they were teaching."<sup>64</sup>

When queried about the suggestion that the good teachers tend to get promoted, Swift agreed with the thesis and provided the following illustration:

I was official trustee of the Montecello School District. It was entirely Ukrainian and it was difficult to find a good school board. So I was official Trustee. I had a vacancy there and I knew a man who had just graduated from Normal School. He was a maturish [sic] person and had been President of the Students' Union. So I put Harry Robinson, that was his name, into Montecello. He did very well there, got along well with the people. There became a vacancy for a principalship in the two-room school at Slave Lake. The Board asked me for a recommendation for somebody. I recommended Harry Robinson. He did very well there and a

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

couple of years later, a similar situation arose in Lac La Biche, a three-room school. Could I recommend somebody for principal? Now at Slave Lake, he would only be teaching up to Grade VIII, maybe Grade IX, but at Lac La Biche, they were teaching up to Grade XI. I recommended Harry Robinson. He went to Lac La Biche and did very well there. The next thing I knew he turned up on the staff of the Edmonton Public School Board. Now that was a series of promotions. But not promotions within a single school district. That illustrates another function of the School Inspector. You would be consulted by the little local school board to help them get a teacher, and so on.<sup>65</sup>

Since their first meeting in 1929 and throughout 1930, Swift had been in more or less constant communication with Mary King. This relationship would culminate in their marriage on July 4, 1931.

#### Marriage and Family

The wedding took place at the King farm home just out of Rosetown, Saskatchewan. Swift recalled:

A goodly number of people were there. After the wedding and reception we headed for Swift Current, one hundred miles south, where I had previously made a reservation in a hotel. Our first married night was spent there. We spent time in Waterton Park, Penticton on the Okanagan, and dipping into the U.S.A.<sup>66</sup>

In preparation for their arrival in Athabasca, Swift had purchased a house which had been built by the Hudson's Bay Company for its resident manager when it had a store and fur purchasing business there during the boom days when travel to

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

the north was largely by way of Athabasca Landing on the Athabasca River.<sup>67</sup>

It was a quite fine looking house, well located, but as I found out in due course, it was cold, had no insulation, and there being no sewer system in Athabasca had no modern toilet facilities. I paid \$1250 for it. Like houses in most Alberta towns at the time it was heated by a wood and coal furnace and the cook-stove was similarly fuelled. During the depression wood was peddled by many a homesteader- a load, split, put through a cellar window and piled for 2 or 3 dollars. Tending the furnace was a chore for Mary when I spent time away from home. There was running water, a tap, but it was heated in a reservoir which was part of the stove.<sup>68</sup>

In May of 1932, their first child, Glenn, was born in the rather crude Athabasca hospital. When a second son, Jim, was born in 1935, they drove to Edmonton and "patronized the University hospital."<sup>69</sup> Swift noted that, "there was no medicare so we paid the doctor's and hospital fees ourselves."<sup>70</sup> On the subject of remuneration Swift recalled that:

I was nominally paid \$2700 a year but soon after my appointment we became subject to a 'voluntary contribution' which brought us pretty close to \$2400. Nevertheless, we were one of the better off families in the town.<sup>71</sup>

During Mary's first year at Athabasca she accompanied

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.



Swift on many of his trips.

We stayed overnight with Mrs. Stanton of Jarvie at the small Gaskill hotel at the old Stave Lake hamlet and some other places. When I visited a school for morning or afternoon she had to wait it out but I think she enjoyed seeing some of my territory.<sup>72</sup>

Mary was described by her son Glenn as "quite strong, a very clever person."<sup>73</sup> In her family, she was the most educated. "That was quite an accomplishment", her son continued:

Nobody went to university in those days, particularly women. She'd got a Home Economics degree.[sic] She was the first dietician at the University of Saskatchewan. It took an awful lot of guts to go through that. Eventually she got another job at the Agricultural College in Olds where she met Dad.<sup>74</sup>

Asked how the family dynamics operated, Glenn recalled that his mother deferred to his father. "She was always second in command."<sup>75</sup> He qualified this by noting that:

There tends to be more equality in families now, of course. . . ., she never worked after they were married [sic]. [My mother] . . .was just totally devoted to bringing us up. Sewing was her recreational outlet.<sup>76</sup>

This devotion to Swift must have come at a price, however. Glenn pointed out that in later years when he was

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Personal interview with Glen Swift, January 22, 1998.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

attending university, he realized that "she must have led a lonely life."<sup>77</sup> He remembered that:

On occasion, I would try to come home about three or four in the afternoon and have tea with her. She was an interesting person to talk to. I know now that she really appreciated it.<sup>78</sup>

In later years, as Swift's career advanced, it is evident that Mary's professional career may have taken a back seat to family life and her "duties" as the wife of a prominent bureaucrat. Glenn Swift, when asked about his mother's role as the wife of the Deputy Minister of Education, remarked:

I don't know how interested she really was. However, I remember that at the dinner table she would take an interest in what he had done through the day. She would try to understand what was going on. It was required, as well, that she attend various functions with my father and that went pretty well. They were both tee totalers and frankly, I've always thought that was a mistake. There's nothing wrong with a social drink and that might have helped loosen them up at some of these occasions. They did not drink until much later when my father might have a glass of wine with dinner,<sup>79</sup> but even then, I think it was just to be polite.

Life was generally comfortable for anyone with a solid job during the Depression, particularly one with some prestige, such as that enjoyed by Swift. The cost of living was low and labour was cheap. He recalled that:

For a couple of years, perhaps three, we had a girl working for us. First it was the Nancekivell girls, who lived at home in town.

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

Then we had Gladys Wold from Tawatinaw and finally Alda Bilsky from Forfar who lived with us. During the depression older farm girls were glad to do this for very little. In fact we paid the live-in girls only eight dollars a month. They and their parents were glad to have them taken care of.<sup>80</sup>

Swift did relatively well for himself and his family during the Depression period. It was also during this time that he built the family cabin at Baptiste Lake. This was to remain a source of pleasure for the family for the rest of his life.

By 1935 Swift had firmly established his credentials as a man on the rise in the educational hierarchy of the Province. He had a graduate degree and was firmly entrenched in the provincial government's administration of education. This seemed to suit Swift's talent for administrative problem solving. The derivation of a solution after a careful and systematic consideration of the facts would become his forte. Bill Swift was also well accepted in the local community. In fact, he became so well known that he was elected to the Town Council in Athabasca, at that time, a town of 500.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 17, 1994.

## CHAPTER IV SOCRATES IN THE MARKETPLACE

By the early 1930s Bill Swift had established a solid foothold within the administrative sector of the Department of Education. He had married Mary King and together, they had begun a family. At a relatively young age, Swift had begun to establish his credentials, obtained a degree of security and social prominence for his family within the milieu of the Great Depression, and had obviously caught the eye of his superiors.

This chapter will further examine W.H. Swift's experiences with the Great Depression as an inspector of schools and how these experiences might have affected his future outlook on education. It will also explore W.H. Swift's career as an instructor in the Camrose Normal School, beginning in 1935, through his graduate school experiences at Stanford University, and as Principal of the Calgary Normal School. The chapter will culminate with Swift's appointment as Chief Inspector of Schools in 1942. The section also reveals Swift's maturation from neophyte teacher through educational administrator to senior bureaucrat in just fourteen years. It also illustrates his growing talent for administration, his meticulous attention to detail, and his ability to perceive order out of complex situations.

## Education and the Great Depression

The Depression was hard on the whole province. In a 1994 interview, Swift outlined his thoughts on the issue vis a vis education. The provincial government suffered drastic loss of revenue during this period. Similarly, according to Swift, municipal and school authorities suffered a great increase in unpaid taxes. While technically, when sufficiently in arrears, lands could be sold under tax recovery proceedings, this was rarely done. According to Swift, "little could be obtained for them and if the occupants were put off their lands they became welfare cases."<sup>1</sup> To a large extent rural school districts were indebted to the banks and eventually their credit rating was reduced to zero.<sup>2</sup>

Swift remembered that it had been common practice among homesteaders for them to clear and work their lands, and erect their buildings, during the summer. In the winter, he noted, "they would find employment in the mines, the forests, on the railways or somewhere to accumulate some cash funds."<sup>3</sup> During the Depression such employment ceased to be available. As a result, in an area like Athabasca there were a great many settlers who had virtually no revenue the year round. Swift pointed out that social assistance did not exist in any

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<sup>1</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 17, 1994.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

organized way and such welfare as was obtained through the Alberta Provincial Police, representing the provincial government, was very meagre.

The point to all this, noted Swift, "was that school districts had little income, and in the homestead districts, practically none at all."<sup>4</sup> He pointed out that during this time school grants were set forth in The School Grants Act and only such amounts as were specified in the Act could be paid. There was one exception, namely that the Minister of Education could authorize what Swift referred to as a "special grant"<sup>5</sup>, to take care of extraordinary circumstances. These, it was presumed, would be relatively infrequent. According to Swift, the basic grant was ninety cents per day per teacher.<sup>6</sup> Hence the school board had to raise the bulk of its financial needs through local taxation. At some point before 1930 there was also established a grant to assist school districts with low assessments (taxable property) on a sliding scale based on ratio of assessment to number of teachers employed, usually one. About 1933 the basic grant was reduced to 75¢ per day.<sup>7</sup> The equalization grant was paid for a maximum of 160 school days, eight months. Many homestead schools operated for only

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

eight months of the year, closing in January and February.<sup>8</sup>

During the early thirties The School Act made no provision for collective bargaining. Each teacher was employed under an individual jointly signed contract which specified "the rate of salary, an annual figure but paid on a daily basis, the rate being divided by 200, and the number of days in a full school year."<sup>9</sup> Teachers' contracts were continuous, Swift noted, but either party could end the contract effective June 30 by giving 30 days notice. A contract could be terminated during the school year with the consent of the Inspector. As a result, there was no real secured tenure.<sup>10</sup> Related to this was that the Act provided that the minimum salary of a teacher was \$840 (the original 210 school days times \$4 per day)<sup>11</sup>, but the Minister was empowered to authorize a lower salary if conditions warranted. Prior to 1930, Swift noted, a salary less than \$840 would be most unusual.<sup>12</sup>

How did these conditions affect teachers? According to Swift, as district funds dried up, teachers' salaries were unpaid in whole or in part, except for the grant. They were

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

given notes for unpaid portions.<sup>13</sup> "The fact was", Swift argued, "that a fairly high percentage of teachers received a very limited amount of actual cash for their teaching."<sup>14</sup>

As districts found themselves in increasingly strapped conditions they began to look at their expenditures and the teacher's salary was a very high portion of these. As a result, Swift noted, the School Boards began to look at salary reductions. Increasingly they applied to the Minister to authorize a salary below \$840.<sup>15</sup> The local school inspector would be asked to investigate and make a recommendation. In due course the requests became a flood. The Minister, Perrin Baker, authorized an official of the department to approve on his behalf all requests for \$700 or more.<sup>16</sup> Eventually many salaries were approved at as low as \$600.<sup>17</sup> Village, town and city salaries also dropped but not to the same degree as in the rural districts. Yet \$1200 became a not unusual salary for the principal of a three or four room village school.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>According to Swift, when the school divisions were formed during the Social Credit period, after 1935, the province paid off all these notes. Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 17, 1994.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>William H. Swift, Memoirs of a Frontier School Inspector in Alberta, John W. Chalmers, ed. (Edmonton: Education Society of Edmonton, 1986), 36-37.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 37.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 37.

<sup>18</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, January 17, 1994.



Rural schools usually had a janitor. According to Swift, this was most often a senior boy or girl who would get to school early and get the fire in the stove going in winter, clean up after school and keep water in the crock or pail for the pupils to drink. The normal stipend for this was \$50 a year.<sup>19</sup> Many Boards were in such straits that they made it a condition of employment that the teacher would do the janitor work. This could not be written into the formal contract but teachers, hard pressed to get a job, would agree verbally to this requirement.<sup>20</sup>

According to Swift, "there soon became a great surplus of teachers, competing with each other for the finite number of places."<sup>21</sup> These factors and no doubt others contributed to this surplus. Swift noted, for example, the outflow of young teachers to other occupations ceased, resulting in fewer annual vacancies. Another factor was that high school graduates, unable to find employment, or to finance university, went into the one-year Normal School program greatly increasing the numbers looking for schools.<sup>22</sup> As well, many who had formerly taught and were forced to enter other work found themselves unemployed and attempted to get

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<sup>19</sup>Swift, Memoirs of a School Inspector, 38.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 38.

<sup>21</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 27, 1996.

<sup>22</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 17, 1994.

back into teaching. "It was a buyers' market", argued Swift, "the School Boards being the buyers."<sup>23</sup> Finally, he continued, School Boards became less able to provide schools with needed supplies, including books. Maintenance was neglected. Morale and working conditions were at an all time low in the one-room schools.<sup>24</sup> According to Swift, the lowest depths of morale in his experience occurred when he "visited a school south of Lac La Biche, summer operation only, and the teacher could only provide [him] . . . with an unchopped round of stovewood to sit on."<sup>25</sup>

As to the quality of teaching? Swift argued that while it "probably fell a bit" due to the factors referred to above, he saw "no particular decline in the devotion and the industry of the teachers."<sup>26</sup> He remembered that:

It was said that the teachers worked harder because they wanted to be sure of not having their contracts terminated. I think this was not the case. I think they recognized that they were in the same boat as their community . . . and merely continued to do their best, as they had or would have done under better circumstances. In other words they continued to be conscientious.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 17, 1994.

## Camrose Normal

During a joint meeting of inspectors and Normal School staffs early in 1935 G.K. Haverstock, the Principal of the Camrose Normal School took Swift aside and asked him if he would like to join his staff as instructor in psychology. In due course Swift accepted.<sup>28</sup> The question must be asked, why leave a secure job from which he derived much satisfaction and which afforded him a good deal of respect throughout the community? Perhaps more importantly, why leave a community in which he and his family had become well entrenched in the midst of the Great Depression? According to Swift:

. . . I was influenced by the fact that I was away from home a good deal, that we had a toddler, . . . age 3, and one on the way. I wanted to be a better family person. On the other hand, there were negatives. I would be giving up the freedom of making my own schedule and becoming controlled by the scheduled life of a Normal School. I was given a \$100 increase in salary, less voluntary contribution, but on the other hand lost the travel expense account which, through my per diem car allowance, really financed car ownership and personal use. In addition there was rent to pay in Camrose. Our Athabasca house<sup>29</sup> was rented to my successor for \$25 per month.

This was not a decision Swift took lightly, as he had turned down an offer of a position earlier at the same school, and, five years earlier, one from the Edmonton Normal School. For example, in 1930, in correspondence with Chief Inspector

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<sup>28</sup>W.H. Swift, Unpublished Memoirs, n.d.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

Gorman, he'd written from the "Sylvan Lake Hotel:"

You will have heard from Mr. Lord [Principal, Edmonton Normal] that I have decided to stay with the inspectoral work. My reasons are threefold: First, I believe my efficiency as a Normal instructor would be much greater later for a term of inspection [sic], especially as much of my work would be primary, in which department I am not well prepared [sic]. Then, my eyes have been none too good during the last year and the city work would be more trying on them. Finally, I have a desire to get out where there is administrative and organizational work to do and the North is attractive.<sup>30</sup>

The Swifts easily adapted to Normal School life. The School and the community being relatively small at that time, much of their social life was related to the academic setting. Swift had always been involved with the Church and his time in Camrose was to be no exception.

Going back to his youth in the Tuxis Parliament, Bill Swift still revelled in the art of debate. According to the Camrose Normal Yearbook, "Mr. Swift as staff representative contributed to the success of the debating club activities by coaching, criticizing speeches, and assisting in the preparation of programs."<sup>31</sup> He was also involved in the Debating Society during his years at the Edmonton Normal

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<sup>30</sup>Correspondence, Swift to Gorman, August 11, 1930. P.A.A. Acc. No. 79.334, Box 28, File 634. In an interview on May 27, 1996, Swift pointed out that he'd had problems with his eyes all through university and later life. "I couldn't read more than 20 minutes to a half an hour at a time." At the time of the interview, in fact, Swift was virtually blind in one eye.

<sup>31</sup>Camrose Normal School Yearbook, 1935-1936, Swift collection. 60.

School, 1938-39 and 1939-40.<sup>32</sup>

Swift commented on many occasions about the close relationship he enjoyed with his fellow instructors at Camrose. An example of this was one of the rare occasions in which he became involved in any public way with the solidarity of his fellow workers. Swift signed the following letter, along with the rest of the Camrose teaching staff, addressed to McNally, the Deputy Minister at the time.

Whereas four years ago the Normal School instructors and Inspectors of Schools were singled out among civil servants for a salary reduction of one-sixth; and whereas in view of the fact that not all persons employed in these two branches benefitted equally through remuneration received for special work, such as Summer School teaching, . . . marking examination papers, and other incidental work, it was agreed that in lieu of a straight reduction . . . of one-sixth, that all should perform such special work without payment other than regular salary. In consideration of this service rendered, the salary reduction should be upon the same basis . . . as the rest of the civil service.<sup>33</sup>

Unfortunately, the biographer was able to find no reply to this correspondence.

According to Swift, during this period in Camrose, there occurred one seemingly minor event that had an effect on their

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<sup>32</sup>Edmonton Normal School Yearbooks, 1938-1940, Swift collection.

<sup>33</sup>Correspondence, Camrose Normal School Teaching Staff to McNally, April 7, 1937. Camrose Normal School general correspondence, Department of Education. P.A.A. Acc. No. 78.92, Box 1.

lives. He recalled that:

Wilf Reese had at one time been a Normal School instructor. At university we had acted together in a play. He had left the direct educational field and joined the publishing firm of W.J.Gage, he being chiefly concerned with school textbooks. Reese had obtained a doctorate and he urged me to pursue further academic study. The more I thought of this the more I became desirous of doing so.<sup>34</sup>

Swift pointed out that Mary encouraged him in this endeavour even though it meant going off salary for at least a year and using up most of their savings. He pointed out that "there were no forms of financial help available and no going away on part salary."<sup>35</sup> He remembered that:

I sent my documentation to a number of universities, all but Toronto being in the United States. No Ph.D degrees were yet available in Western Canada. Toronto offered me some sort of assistance at a thousand dollars a year for two years. [However,] we could not live on that. The best deal came from Stanford University in California. I would require four quarters, . . . a full year plus a summer session.<sup>36</sup>

In his usual meticulous fashion, Swift arranged for his leave well in advance of the contemplated departure. He clearly itemized what he required in a letter to H.C. Newland:

That I be granted leave of absence from July 1 of this year, with salary until September 1, and that I be granted further leave . . . from September 1 of this year until July 1, 1938, without pay. I would thus return to Alberta in

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<sup>34</sup>Interview with W.H. Swift, June 17, 1994.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

time to teach Summer School in 1938.<sup>37</sup>

Ever the pragmatic opportunist, he went on to write:

It occurs to me that in the next Normal School year, you might not object to having an instructor or two out of the way in view of the fact that the enrolment will again be curtailed and a reduction of staff would be justified. Upon my return, due to retirements which I understand are imminent, I could probably be absorbed again into the staff without difficulty.<sup>38</sup>

According to a 1996 interview, Swift noted that, in fact, Newland had tried to arrange for him to get a further three months paid leave to stay in California but had been turned down by the Finance Department. So he returned to teach summer school in Edmonton. Swift speculated that this may have inadvertently helped his career, as when, later, the position of Director of the Department of Education Summer School became vacant, he was appointed. Swift further speculated that this might have been "because Newland felt guilty about not having got me the extra three months!"<sup>39</sup>

### Stanford

Swift got leave of absence from the Department of Education, pursued the necessary procedures for crossing into

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<sup>37</sup>Correspondence, Swift to Newland, January 22, 1937. Camrose Normal School general correspondence, Department of Education. P.A.A. Acc. No. 78.42, Box 1.

<sup>38</sup>Correspondence, Swift to Newland, January 22, 1937. Camrose Normal School general correspondence, Department of Education. P.A.A. Acc. No. 78.42, Box 1.

<sup>39</sup>Personal interview, W.H. Swift, May 27, 1996.

the United States and in August, 1937, the family were on their way. They loaded a freight trailer and set off for Stanford University and California in the midst of the Great Depression.<sup>40</sup> Glenn Swift, although very young at the time, later recalled one incident during the trip:

I vaguely recall the trip down to Stanford. We towed a trailer, which he made. I remember that there were problems with the trailer hitch, it came off several times. On one occasion, he hiked to a nearby farm, asked the farmer if he could use his shop, and fashioned another hitch for us. Very self sufficient!<sup>41</sup>

Upon arrival, Swift wrote that:

The first problem was to find living accommodation for a family of four. Two days of searching produced only increasing concern, lack of available places and too high costs. We almost decided to go home. On the third day I went into a small real estate office along the highway. Here there was good fortune. There was available a small cottage, one of four about a small courtyard. It had four rooms and a bathroom that could be entered directly from either bedroom. It had an ice-box refrigerator and a gas heater set vertically in the wall. There was a shed-like garage. We paid \$32.50 monthly which included one utility. . . . The cottage lay in a subdivision immediately adjacent to the Stanford Campus. All streets bore the names of American universities. Ours was Columbia Street.<sup>42</sup>

At the time Stanford was regarded as one of the leading Education universities in the United States along with Columbia, Chicago, Minnesota and a few others. According to

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Personal interview with Glen Swift, January 22, 1998.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.



Swift, one of Stanford's big names was E.L. Terman, a pioneer in intelligence testing which was de rigueur at the time. Swift recalled that he took one course from Terman "but he was getting a bit old and his lectures were less well structured than I would have wished."<sup>43</sup> However, he "enjoyed some evening seminars held in his home."<sup>44</sup> According to Swift, on one occasion, he visited Professor Terman in his office to complain about a low mark awarded him by a teaching assistant which he was sure was not correct. Terman concurred in his judgment and upped his mark. According to Swift:

As I was about to leave he asked me to remain. He then asked me the following question: 'Why do the Canadian students that we have here do better, on average, than our local students?' My answer was that there was a selective process operating. Canada was a long way distant. Coming was expensive. There was a greater sense of going into the unknown. One was not likely to make the decision to come unless his record had given him a quite high level of confidence that he could succeed.<sup>45</sup>

Another anecdote had to do with the fact that "it was then almost universal . . . that a Ph.D. candidate had to pass tests in two languages, usually French and German, presumably so that relevant material could be read in the originals of these languages."<sup>46</sup> Swift had some knowledge of French from his undergraduate days, "though not really at a very high

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

level."<sup>47</sup> In due course he presented himself for the French test and passed. German, however, was a different matter. He remembered that:

In Camrose, I had taken a radio course in it [German] from CKUA.<sup>48</sup> Then I went at it myself. Knowing that I was not really ready, I presented myself to Professor Jesse Sears, who had also examined me in French. I did not do well. However, when I came for my results he said that I had not really demonstrated a proper level but that, since I had done so well in the French, he was issuing the necessary certificate. He added, 'of course you people up there in Canada speak both languages'.<sup>49</sup>

Throughout his time at Stanford, Swift maintained a regular correspondence with H.C. Newland, his immediate superior. The letters leave one with the impression that it was important to Swift to maintain contact with his immediate superior in order to keep his position with the Department secure. Advice was asked of Newland, for example, regarding whether or not Swift would be better off with a Ph.D. or an Ed.D designation. Swift wrote: "Would you consider from the standpoint of acceptability as a qualification for positions within the Department of Education in Alberta that it [the Ed.D.] would be equivalent?"<sup>50</sup> To which Newland replied:

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>At that time, a radio station affiliated with the University of Alberta.

<sup>49</sup>W.H. Swift, Unpublished Memoirs, n.d.

<sup>50</sup>Correspondence, Swift to Newland, September 22, 1937. Camrose Normal School general correspondence, Department of Education. P.A.A. Acc. No. 78.92, Box 1.

So far as we are concerned in Alberta, . . . I can assure you that a degree in education [Ed.D.] would be of as much, perhaps even more, value as the Ph.D.. . . A great deal will depend . . on the calibre of the men under whom you take your courses."<sup>51</sup>

The "courses" went well for Bill Swift. Typically understating his performance, he noted that he had "created a reasonably good reputation."<sup>52</sup> So good, in fact, that towards the end of his program, the Dean inquired whether or not he would be interested in accepting a post at Stanford.<sup>53</sup> Swift recalled that, "we could not see ourselves giving up all our Canadian associations and since I had a job to return to in any event, I declined."<sup>54</sup>

The final oral examination stood out in Swift's memory:

In the room was a large oval table. One end had what I refer to as a bite out of it. The person being examined was seated in the bite, perhaps to give him a sense of security. The rule at Stanford was that a Ph.D. oral had to be presided over by a professor from another faculty. My chairman was a history professor. He played no part in the examining but I suppose the rationale was to ensure that comprehensive and serious examining was done. After an hour or so of examining, I was asked to leave the room and remain near by. Shortly, to my great relief, my adviser called me in and I was informed that I had passed. This was the last hurdle except for the thesis

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<sup>51</sup>Correspondence, Newland to Swift, October 4, 1937. Camrose Normal School general correspondence, Department of Education. P.A.A. Acc. No. 78.92, Box 1.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

which I was to complete back in Canada. My topic had been selected and approved before leaving and I had consulted and recorded all the relevant references I could find in the Stanford library. The subject was with respect to an aspect of Gestalt psychology, this particular interpretation of psychology being the fashionable thing at the time.<sup>55</sup>

Of the thesis itself, Swift offered only the following wry comment: "When it [the dissertation] was eventually completed and summarized in a Stanford publication it created no stir in academic quarters."<sup>56</sup>

The work was based, in part, on a rather obscure study by Seagoe<sup>57</sup> and cited everyone from Max Wertheimer and the German Gestalt school to E.L. Thorndike, W.H. Kilpatrick and John Dewey. After a review, "in careful detail" of the experimental work which had been done within the "whole-part" problem area in learning, Swift proposed to analyze it in the light of the "newer conception of psychological wholeness as found in the writings of the Gestalt psychologists and the Progressive educators."<sup>58</sup> He then proposed to develop "a comprehensive series of experimental learning situations which came within the definitions of wholeness as previously set

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid. See W.H.Swift, "A Comparative Study of Two Methods of Presentation by Wholes of Materials to be Learned". Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1942.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>May V. Seagoe, "Perceptual Units in Learning: An Evaluation of the Whole-Part Problem", Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Stanford University, 1934.

<sup>58</sup>Swift, "A Comparative Study", 1-2.

forth."<sup>59</sup>

Given the period in which Swift wrote the thesis, it is not a large step from the German conception of the gestalt, to the "whole child", progressive zeitgeist then prevalent in educational circles throughout the United States. In fact, as Swift pointed out in the introduction:

Consider . . .the implication of the Gestalt theory for the field in which this investigation lies. Stated briefly it would seem . . .that given set of materials to learn, the learning will be most effectively accomplished if the learner proceeds in that manner which is most conducive to developing the Gestalt, that manner which provides him with the greatest opportunity, not only to perceive or experience the parts which enter into the whole, but perhaps even more important, the interrelations of them. To learn an element in isolation is to learn it incorrectly for its nature is different when it is a component part of the whole. . . . The learner should have the whole presented to him from the beginning and gradually come to understand or to encompass the details as integrated parts of it.<sup>60</sup>

His conclusion fit perfectly his point of view on the then current attempts under way in Alberta to integrate progressive ideas into the curriculum. By the time Swift finished the dissertation in 1942, he was Principal of the Calgary Normal School. He was thus able to observe, first hand, the problems inherent in the "enterprise" program. This was a largely rural school system which laboured under the twin thralldoms of chronic teacher shortages and inadequate

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid. 2.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 25-26.

training. He argued that:

Time and time again, both through controlled experimentation by educational and psychological researchers, and by common observation of classroom and other educational procedures, it has been shown that given any reasonable sort of opportunity to experience, that the human being learns, especially perceptual and conceptual material. The human child has learned to read under alphabet methods, word methods, sentence methods, incidental methods, and many others. Similarly he has learned to use arithmetical computations under a variety of pedagogical procedures . . . . This might seem to be a condemnation of all interest in method, for if the individual learns anyway, why bother to improve methods of presentation? It is not intended, however to be interpreted that way. Rather we should come to the realization that we cannot expect miracles through a modification of method of presentation and that instead we should be cheered whenever we find some new way<sup>61</sup> of simply enhancing the educational experience.

Swift eventually received his Doctorate in January of 1942.

#### The Normal School Principal

After the Stanford experience, the Swifts returned to Edmonton, the Camrose Normal School having been closed during their absence. The reasoning behind this closure was two-fold. It was thought more advisable to re-open the Edmonton School, which had been closed for the previous two years, and close Camrose, in order to cater to northern Alberta and to give rural students an urban, and therefore more varied,

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 114-115.

experience.<sup>62</sup>

Back in Edmonton, starting in September of 1938, Swift was caught up in a series of circumstances and activities that kept him from getting down to the thesis. A third child, Marilyn, was added to the family. He was assigned a new course to teach at the School. Finally, Swift was appointed Director of the Department of Education Summer School which took a lot of time in preparation and execution. It operated as a joint venture with the Summer Session of the University of Alberta.<sup>63</sup>

It would be prudent, in this setting, to mention the work of J.W. Chalmers<sup>64</sup>, in order to place the preceding into the context of the times. Chalmers wrote that in 1937, training for the second-class, or interim certificate, which had come about due to chronic teacher shortages in the Province, was dropped. Summer schools were filled with teachers who realized that upgrading their qualifications would increase opportunities on the job front. In fact, Chalmers went as far as to call the 1930s, "the golden age of Alberta's normal

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<sup>62</sup>J.W. Chalmers, Schools of the Foothills Province: The Story of Public Education in Alberta, (University of Toronto Press, 1967), 422-23.

<sup>63</sup>W.H. Swift, Unpublished Memoirs, n.d.

<sup>64</sup>For his chapter on the Normal Schools, Chalmers relied somewhat on the earlier research carried out by G. Mann in his unpublished M.A. thesis entitled, "Alberta Normal Schools: A Descriptive Study of Their Development, 1905-1945", (Edmonton, University of Alberta, 1961).

schools."<sup>65</sup> He argued that, during this period, the higher qualifications of the students were complemented by more experimental programming. Unfortunately, however, by 1938, a decline in the quality of teachers had started with such contributing factors as fewer urban students entering the schools, the shortening of programs and the lowering of entrance requirements during World War II. Finally, by the end of the War, teacher education was turned over fully to the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta.<sup>66</sup> It was in this setting, then, that Swift found himself after leaving Stanford.

In 1940, he was appointed Principal of the Calgary Normal School. Incredibly, Swift was, at that time, the youngest and the most junior of the entire Normal School staff, Edmonton and Calgary. He recalled that he:

presided over the first staff meeting with some trepidation. There was Dr. Sansom, a highly regarded person in Alberta Education. I learned later that he had been offered the principalship but had declined, partly because he was close to retirement and because of some domestic problems. There were Olive Fisher, Arthur Hutton and Joe Scott who had been my instructors in 1925 and were still on staff. There was George Sheane who had taught me grades 10 and 11 in Tofield, and there was Dewar McDougall who was principal of the Viking school when I taught there. Here was I now senior to each of them. There were no visible evidences of concern or unhappiness

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<sup>65</sup>Chalmers, 423.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 422-24.



and I soon found myself comfortably in charge.<sup>67</sup>

According to Swift's recollection, his salary as a Normal School principal was \$3600 a year which at that time was a reasonably comfortable income to live on.<sup>68</sup> In fact there was still in effect the "voluntary contribution", initiated during the depression which brought it down to about \$3000. This deduction was phased out about 1942.<sup>69</sup> Swift pointed out that, during the whole of their Normal School days, Mary was the home-maker and had the major responsibility in raising the three children. "She was very faithful in attending Normal School functions and became highly regarded by staff and students."<sup>70</sup>

The promotion to Calgary was a big step for Swift.

Although I had big steps before and they hadn't bothered me, School Inspector, Normal School instructor, these were all big steps. When I was at the Edmonton Normal School for two years, 1939-40, I also served as Director of the Department of Education Summer School. That took a lot of organizing and getting staff and then administering the thing.<sup>71</sup>

Swift's duties as Principal were essentially administrative. He remembered that he:

. . . had to organize the timetable, for example, at the beginning of the year. Incidentally, I had

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<sup>67</sup>W.H. Swift, unpublished memoirs, n.d.

<sup>68</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, July 14, 1994.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>W.H. Swift, Unpublished Memoirs, n.d.

<sup>71</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, July 15, 1994.

very little time to prepare because I was Director of the Summer Session in Edmonton that year until the middle of August and then I had to open the Normal School early in September. So I didn't have much time to think about it. The duties were pretty much routine. . . . One problem was that the Normal School was moved out of its home quarters and into [temporary quarters] . . . because the Normal School [was] . . . taken over by the military. So I had to organize, during that three week period or so, getting our school equipment and furniture moved and figuring out who was going to be where, and in what classroom, and so on.<sup>72</sup>

As well as his administrative duties as Principal, Swift also taught "School Administration."<sup>73</sup>

Swift reported, technically, to H.C. Newland. In actuality, they did not have a great deal of contact with one another. "He pretty well let me run my own show."<sup>74</sup> Obviously, their correspondence the previous year did not mark the beginning of a close personal association.

Swift's second year was one in which "there was a great shortage of teachers, because so many had gone into the armed forces."<sup>75</sup> A scheme was worked out by the Department whereby the students of the Normal schools, for a third of the year would go out and teach. So very shortly, into his second year, he became involved in:

. . . picking out a third of our students, whom I scarcely knew, to go out into the

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, May 14, 1994.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

rural schools, all over Alberta, and then, when they came back, send another bunch out! I have always said about those students that went out, and then came back, were much better students as a result of having that two and a half months of experience, with little, or no, supervision. There was no teacher there, they were the teacher. The local school inspector would be expected to be of some assistance to them.<sup>76</sup>

Other tasks included supervision of the janitorial staff and his relationship with the Principal of the Practice School. Since there was no clerk of any sort to do all the schedules and record keeping, it was up to Swift. He pointed out that he would be "considerably involved in making practice school placements, for making arrangements for members of our own staff to go out and do some observing."<sup>77</sup>

In a 1994 interview, Swift was asked about the general curriculum taught in the Normal Schools during this period and what the training consisted of. According to Swift, the following subjects were taught: Psychology; Primary Methods; Art and Penmanship; Arithmetic; Sciences; Health; Music; Social Studies; Physical Education; while he, himself, taught School Management. He pointed out that:

When I say that, for example George Shane taught mathematics, in theory he was teaching them how to teach mathematics or arithmetic. He would have to interweave the teaching of arithmetic because the students would come somewhat deficient in their knowledge. Also he would be doing the best he could to teach

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

them how to teach arithmetic.<sup>78</sup>

There was no particular curriculum assigned by the Dept. of Education.<sup>79</sup> For example, "Dr. Sansom was assigned to teach psychology. The psychology that he taught, the text books that he used, the manner of his teaching, that was entirely up to him."<sup>80</sup> The same was true with the other instructors. In terms of assessment, Swift noted that he made no attempt to assess the teaching of his staff members. "Now I did learn, in various ways that some instructors were doing things better than others, at least from the standpoint of the students."<sup>81</sup>

Regarding the issue of standardized testing, Swift related the following tale:

In my second year at Camrose Normal, 1936-37, it was decreed by the Department that immediately upon arrival students should be tested with respect to their levels of accomplishment in the major school subjects. To this end, over two days, there was administered a series of

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>It should be noted here that there is a large body of material dealing with Normal School teacher training in Alberta. See for example, K. Tony Hollihan's exceptional analysis of the Normal School experience, "Deconstructive Reconstruction: An Institutional Critique of the Alberta Normal School", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1995); also R. Patterson, Go, Grit and Gumption: A Normal School Perspective on Teacher Education (Edmonton: Faculty of Education, University of Alberta, 1983); G. Mann, "Alberta Normal Schools: A Descriptive Study of Their Development, 1905-1945", unpublished master's thesis, (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1961).

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

standardized tests which had been produced and norms established in Ontario. I found myself presiding over a class working on a test of their knowledge of Canadian History. With little to do I went over one of the extra papers myself. I found that I knew the answers to almost all the questions. A thought struck me. We were next door to the library. I left my post for long enough to slip in and obtain a Canadian History text. Using it I completed a perfect paper. When the members of the class had turned in their papers I slipped my paper into the pile having put on it the name Annie Bunko. I delivered the papers to Gerald Manning, teacher of History. Our offices were all located close together about a sort of foyer. Next morning I heard Gerald talking to Bern Trout, English. Had he yet marked his papers and if so how had a student, Annie Bunko, done? She having turned in a perfect History paper. He brought from his office his class sheet but could not find Annie Bunko on it. Genevieve Twomey came along. Had she identified an Annie Bunko? No, but she would get her list. No Annie could be found. At this point the Principal, George Haverstock, came by and was informed of the strange situation. He said, 'yes, we have an Annie Bunko. I remember registering her myself.' I now realized at this point that it was all getting a little deeper than I expected. I came out of my office and sheepishly revealed all. George Haverstock gave a grunt, turned on his heel, and went down the stairs leaving a group engaged in subdued laughter. Actually there was a student named Bushko but I did not know this at the time.<sup>82</sup>

In his own opinion, at least, Swift had favourable relations with the students. "There was something about the Normal Schools evidenced in many ways and over long periods of time that seemed to create a high sense of camaraderie."<sup>83</sup> According to Swift:

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

Many reunions have been held and have been very happy affairs. The greatest of these was no doubt the Camrose reunion of 1988, commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the closing of that School. Over 500 sat down to dinner at which I was the speaker by virtue of being the only remaining former teacher.<sup>84</sup>

Upon his assignment to the Calgary Normal School, the Students' Executive welcomed Mr. Swift( he had still not received the doctorate) in an appropriately political manner:

Our sense of loss [retirement of the previous Principal, Dr. Coffin] is diminished by our liking for Mr. Swift. He has proven himself a very capable organizer and has shown that he is excellently fitted for his new position . . . . To previous Normal School students and others who have not had the privilege of making his acquaintance, we would introduce him as a scholar of sincerity and ability. To those of you who came after we can commend him with all our hearts. Outside of school hours, Mr. Swift is keenly interested and takes an active part in student affairs. He is Honourary President of the Students' Council and Debating Club. As often as possible (which was practically every time), Mr. Swift could be seen sitting beside Mrs. Swift at the basketball games, both ardently interested in the proceedings . . . . It took us a long time to discover that he also plays the clarinet, in an amateur way - so he claims!<sup>85</sup>

According to his address to the students in the 1940-41 Yearbook, Swift mentioned the "Normal School in exile", having recently moved due to War emergencies and having a reduced staff.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>Calgary Normal School Yearbook, 1940-1941, Swift collection. 22.

<sup>86</sup>Calgary Normal School Yearbook, 1940-1941, Swift collection. 17.

You have proved what, of course we all know, but often overlook, that it is not the buildings, furniture, equipment, books and materials that make the school, although they may assist, but rather it is the human material, the teacher, the students, the interest, the will to learn, the inquiring mind, the effort, the friendship of student with student, and of student with instructor, the reciprocity of ideas, the search for truth. These are the fundamentals of education. These are 'Socrates in the Marketplace', Mark Hopkins and his pupil on a log, and Christ by the shores of Galilee . . . . The secrets of successful learning and teaching are to be found within yourselves and within the pupils of your school."<sup>87</sup>

It might be important here to attempt to place Swift's experiences, politically, socially, and, to a certain extent, philosophically, within the context of the period under discussion. By 1935, Alberta, like the rest of Canada and most of the rest of the industrialized world was in the midst of the Great Depression. Desperately seeking a way out of this economic, social and political morass, growing numbers of Albertans, like many other Canadians, turned increasingly to alternative forms of government. As Horn wrote, "The Depression laid the basis for later advances toward government advances in the economy, and toward the modified welfare state that Canada eventually became."<sup>88</sup>

In 1935, after fourteen years of UFA administration, a

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<sup>87</sup>Calgary Normal School Yearbook, 1940-1941, Swift collection. 16-17.

<sup>88</sup>Michiel Horn, ed., The Depression in Canada: Responses to Economic Crisis, (Toronto:, Copp Clark Pittman Ltd., 1988), 10

radically new political movement, Social Credit, was swept to power. The Social Credit party employed the "unique" combination of its leader, William Aberhart's personal charisma and high profile as a result of the prophetically fundamentalist "Back to the Bible Hour" radio broadcasts, and an "eccentric" economic theory, based on the ideas of Major C.H. Douglas. Thus, Aberhart, the former principal of Calgary's Crescent Heights High School, became Premier of Alberta.<sup>89</sup>

It has been argued that while Social Credit sought to defend the interests of the "the people", it offered only a vague definition of who this group actually consisted of, suggesting only that it did not include financial interests, government planners, bureaucrats and political parties.<sup>90</sup> Generally Socreds had a negative image of the state and of civil servants, seeing them as pawns of financial interests and therefore opposed to the best interests of the people. On the other hand, Laycock noted the extent to which Social Credit accepted that the creation of public policy was the preserve of scientific experts. Socreds held to the notion

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<sup>89</sup>Excellent sketches of William Aberhart and the rise of Social Credit appear in T.C. Byrne's, Alberta's Revolutionary Leaders, (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1991) and D.R. Elliott and I. Miller, "Aberhart and the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute", Prairie Forum, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1984). For a more in-depth analysis of the Social Credit phenomenon in general, see Alvin Finkel's, The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989).

<sup>90</sup>von Heyking, 208.



that the economic and social problems plaguing the province, and all modern societies, could be solved scientifically. The task of governments, according to this ideology, was to locate those with appropriate expertise and implement the policies these experts advocated. "The public . . . did not need to understand the methods or policies designed by the experts; the public could judge the effectiveness of the policies by their results."<sup>91</sup> To some Social Credit ministers, the existing civil service did not represent policy expertise. In fact, there was a suspicion among some members that the bureaucrats were actively undermining Social Credit policy initiatives.<sup>92</sup>

It was likely, since Aberhart and many others in the upper hierarchy of the Party had teaching backgrounds, that education was given a high priority in the new administration, although it had not played that great a role in the election.<sup>93</sup> Von Heyking's observations might confirm this. She wrote that:

Aberhart took on the Education portfolio himself. Aberhart's relationship with the members of the Department of Education, in contrast, was extremely cordial. He recognized their expertise and in large measure accepted the advice and policy they advocated. To some extent, his deference may have been due to a lingering respect he felt for men who had been his superiors; it may also have been a result of his respect for their graduate

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 208.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 208.

<sup>93</sup>Byrne, 129.

education.<sup>94</sup>

The Premier established a good rapport with the Deputy Minister of Education at the time, G. Fred McNally, who was also, according to Byrne, "a dedicated Baptist layman."<sup>95</sup> In fact, according to his autobiography, McNally claimed to have suggested to Aberhart that he "not overlook himself" when it came time to select his Minister of Education.<sup>96</sup> In consultation with McNally, Aberhart decided to pursue an educational reform based around an amalgamation of the many school districts into larger school divisions. This had been an idea that Perrin Baker, the former Minister of Education in the UFA government, had considered introducing.<sup>97</sup> As well, changes in the curriculum were on the horizon in the form of what was known as "progressive education."

Progressive education, although its social reform-based ideas go back much further, was most succinctly articulated in the work of the American philosopher-educator, John Dewey at the turn of the century.<sup>98</sup> Imbued with catch phrases, often

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 209.

<sup>95</sup>Byrne, 127.

<sup>96</sup>H.T. Coutts, B.E. Walker, eds., G. Fred: The Story of G. Fred McNally, (Don Mills: J.M. Dent & Sons Limited, 1964), 71.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 127.

<sup>98</sup>For analyses of progressive education and its antecedents, see Harold Rugg, Foundations for American Education, (New York, World Book Company, 1947); Lawrence A. Cremin, The Transformation of the School, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961). For an excellent study on progressive education

originating with Dewey's multitude of interpreters, such as "child-centred education", "learning by doing", "interest-based learning" and "individualized instruction",<sup>99</sup> progressive education was often characterized as one half of a titanic struggle with more "traditional" styles of education. Progressive education, according to Nick Kach, entailed more than changes in curriculum and pedagogy. It had a philosophy of its own derived from the theories of the philosophical movement called pragmatism.<sup>100</sup> Going back to Charles Sanders Peirce, pragmatism or experimentalism was an extension of historical empiricism with the difference that it insisted "not upon antecedent phenomena, but upon the possibilities of action."<sup>101</sup> For Dewey, this reaffirmed faith in intelligence and in the scientific method as indispensable to moral and social life. He was "convinced that the solution to man's problems lay in the application of

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in Canada see, R.S. Patterson, "The Canadian Response to Progressive Education", in Nick Kach et al., Essays on Canadian Education, (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Limited, 1986), 61-77; For its implementation in Alberta see, R.S. Patterson, "The Establishment of Progressive Education in Alberta". Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1968.

<sup>99</sup>R.S. Patterson, "The Canadian Response to Progressive Education", in Kach et al. eds., Essays on Canadian Education, (Calgary: Detselig, 1986), 61-77. Many of these slogans were, in fact, more a product of the minds of Dewey's interpreters than of the man, himself.

<sup>100</sup>Nick Kach, "Progressive Education in Alberta", in Kach et al. Essays on Canadian Education, (Calgary: Detselig, 1986), 97.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 97.

the methods of the natural sciences", and schooling should lead the way in this regard.<sup>102</sup> Dewey's ideas also owed much to the operational psychology of Pierce and William James. Add to this, the progressivists' leanings towards a more "liberal" interpretation of judeo-christian theology<sup>103</sup>, and the struggle with the forces of conservatism can be easily understood.

Although attitudes toward a new outlook toward children manifested themselves in Canadian educational circles going back to the mid-nineteenth century, "the years of the Great Depression and the Second World War were the time when the movement flourished in Canada."<sup>104</sup>

In Alberta, progressivism took the form of a new curriculum centred around the ubiquitous term "enterprise". In September of 1935, the enterprise program was introduced into the schools for the elementary grades. Samples of the main principles included:

- (i) The enterprises . . . are to be activity procedures for motivating the acquisition of fundamental skills and for presenting the learning materials of content subjects in loose groupings . . . . They are not activity units in that extreme form in which there is complete fusion of subject-matter content, and through which learning is incidental rather than teacher directed.
- (ii) The grade designation will be retained,

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<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 97-117.

<sup>103</sup>Rugg, Foundations, 26-27.

<sup>104</sup>Patterson, The Canadian Response to Progressive Education, 62.

however, not for the purpose of promotion, but merely to attain levels of attainment.  
(iii) The programme will be arranged in such a manner that teachers may elect as little or as much of the enterprise work as they desire.<sup>105</sup>

The guidelines also called for a "fusion" of geography, history and civics into a new social studies programme. Activities in enterprise were to include music, art, drama, literature, health and science.<sup>106</sup> According to Kach, a year later, H.C. Newland , Supervisor of Schools pointed out that: "this new programme . . . has quickened the pulse of activity in thousands of Alberta schools."<sup>107</sup> Newland went on to note that "several thousand teachers have taken special courses in enterprise education at the summer school."<sup>108</sup>

In 1994, Swift was asked to reminisce about some of the changes brought about by the Social Credit Government when they were trying to bring in new "progressive" changes to the curriculum and pedagogy. He remembered that when he had come out of Normal School, his employment was different from the vast majority of those who graduated. They had simply the one year of Normal School and, at that time, Alberta was covered with one room schools. This is where the vast majority went. "A one room school where they taught whatever there was there,

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<sup>105</sup>As quoted in Kach, 106.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., 106.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid. 106.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid, 106.

from grades I to VIII, and sometimes Grade IX too!"<sup>109</sup> He went on to point out that:

Of course, all the time I was Deputy Minister of Education to the time I left the Department of Education, in 1966, there was the Social Credit Government. . . . Probably the largest thing that happened during my period was the disappearance of the one room school. This came about due to the establishment of the school divisions. The aggregating of the very small rural schools into a larger unit of administration. This led, gradually, to the elimination of the one-room school. This wasn't due to any vigorous action on the part of the Department of Education or the Government. It is true that the setting up of the school divisions came about as a result of the action of the Social Credit Government, but bear in mind that Perrin Baker, the last, in fact the only Minister of Education of the United Farmers' Government, was very much of the view that what we now call "school divisions" should be created. However, every time it was brought to the Trustees' Convention, it was solidly voted down. So Perrin Baker never saw his dream come to fruition.<sup>110</sup>

He went on to note that when Mr. Aberhart and Social Credit set up their platform, their main interest was a new economic system. Swift argued that, "as far as the large bulk of the people were concerned, the understanding was that once

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<sup>109</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 10, 1994.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid. In fact, according to David Jones, the first amalgamated school division appeared in 1932 at Berry Creek, an occurrence which Baker would have overseen. See David C. Jones, Empire of Dust: Settling and Abandoning the Prairie Dry Belt, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1989), 191-192.

this was done, everybody would get \$25 a month."<sup>111</sup> Swift pointed out that:

Somewhere in the platform, however, and I usually refer to it as 'item 17', but I don't know exactly where it was, there was this item about larger units of school administration. Nobody, or at least, very few noticed this, and he wasn't elected on the basis of it. However, when he became Premier, and decided to put it into effect, he could say, 'well, it was part of our platform. You authorized us to do this'. It became a very difficult thing to do. It was very unpopular with the local schools and trustees. I suppose it's only natural. There were some undefined fears that they had that some things would surely go wrong if these large units were set up. In any event, it was done over a number of years. This had just started before I became Chief Inspector and it continued to go on during the time I was Chief Inspector and on into the Deputy Minister period.<sup>112</sup>

Swift went on to add that a very important component of this was the gradual inclusion of village and town school districts into the school divisions. When the School Divisions were set up they included only the rural school districts and the towns and villages continued to operate

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<sup>111</sup>Ibid. This was a product of a variation on C.H. Douglas' "A + B Theorem" which argued, among other things, that the price of consumer goods was equal to wages (A) plus the cost of production (B). Unfortunately, according to Douglas, consumers only received (A). Therefore, the difference had to be made up artificially. For Aberhart and his followers, then, the way out of the Depression was to increase consumer spending by priming the pump, so to speak. This was where the elusive \$25 dividend to be paid to all Albertan tax payers came in. For various reasons, including constitutional ones, this never materialized. See Walter D. Young, Democracy and Discontent: Progressivism, Socialism and Social Credit in the Canadian West, (Toronto: McGraw, Hill, Ryerson Limited, 1978), 84-85.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid.

their own schools. "However, to get any of the larger development of school operations, you had to have the town and the area around it working together."<sup>113</sup> Swift argued that, "in the end, the abolition of the one-room school occurred to make room for the centralized schools."<sup>114</sup>

When asked what his opinion on the issue was at the time, Swift commented that he "felt very much in favour of it."<sup>115</sup> He noted that, even though he was at the Camrose Normal School at the time and was not closely concerned about what was going on, he went out on few occasions with Claude Robinson, the Inspector of Schools, to attend local meetings which were being held all over the Province over this issue.<sup>116</sup> In most of these meetings, Swift continued, Robinson "found himself having a hard time persuading people that this ought to be done."<sup>117</sup>

Swift's period of Normal School training and teaching, and the Inspector period, from the point of view of the chronology, could be interpreted as the "traditional" period in terms of the way children were seen and taught. This was an

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<sup>113</sup>Ibid.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid. As will be outlined later in this dissertation, Swift, as Deputy Minister, would find himself in the thick of this still raging debate well into the 1950s, the Atlee-Jenner affair being one of the most publicized.



approach which manifested itself in a preoccupation with subject-centred learning.<sup>118</sup> The later "progressive" period is one in which education was supposedly much more "child-centred", shifting, as Patterson described it, towards "a concern for character development essential to effective citizenship."<sup>119</sup> When asked if it was a reasonable assessment to say that everyone taught the progressive method after 1935, and prior to this time everyone taught the "traditional" method, Swift stated the following:

Well, that wouldn't be true, of course. The one reason that you can't expect teachers aged twenty-five, thirty-five, forty-five, to suddenly turn over and do things differently than what they had been doing. My period of being a School Inspector, of course, was I think, before we ever heard of 'traditional education'. However, it was while I was teaching in the Normal School, that the 'Enterprise' was developed in Alberta. It was one of the many forms of what came to be called 'progressive education'. But, the 'enterprise' way of doing things was not successful. It was not successful because the teachers, the classrooms, the equipment, and so on, just weren't ready for it. We still had one-room schools! It takes a lot more time, a lot more preparation, to develop and organize the thing called the "enterprise". [However], gradually it developed, and I suppose it would be in part due to the training of teachers and the education of teachers being transferred to the university, and the time spent in training becoming longer. I think probably that had a great deal of influence on the changes in the manner [in which] teaching was being done, the way that classrooms were organized.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup>As quoted in R.S. Patterson, "The Canadian Response to Progressive Education", 61.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., 61.

<sup>120</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 10, 1994.

Asked how these new methods were accepted by instructors in the Normal Schools, Swift pointed out that there was a very considerable difference among the members of the staff. This was "not entirely a matter of age, but to some extent it might have been."<sup>121</sup> According to Swift, the chief exponent of the "enterprise" was Dr. Donald Dickie who was, herself a Normal School instructor.<sup>122</sup> "So there was a close relationship with the Normal Schools through that channel [sic]."<sup>123</sup> I think there was what I would call a spectrum there. Swift pointed out that:

Dr. Donald Dickie was the founder and, consequently, very much a believer in, and an exponent of the enterprise. As far as I'm aware, she's the one that brought forward the term. I'm not aware of [it] having been used elsewhere in other jurisdictions, at least not until it was used in Alberta.<sup>124</sup>

The Department, headed by Director of Curriculum H.C. Newland, insisted that the Normal Schools espouse the "enterprise" and that the practice school of the Normal School institute it. Further, according to Swift, that each

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<sup>121</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, July 24, 1996.

<sup>122</sup>See, D. Dickie, The Enterprise in Theory and Practice, (Toronto: Gage, 1941).

<sup>123</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, July 24, 1996.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid. Patterson argued that, in fact, the "enterprise" was a term used commonly in British Progressive circles, derived from the Haddow Report. See: R.S. Patterson, "The Implementation of Progressive Education in Canada, 1930-1945", in N. Kach et al., Essays on Canadian Education, (Calgary: Detselig, 1987), 82.

instructor in the Normal School be assigned to a teacher in the practice school and they would jointly work out an enterprise. Swift recalled:

I remember being attached to a teacher named Mabel Larson and we developed an enterprise based on Japan. Both of us took it quite seriously and did what we could. I know that some of my colleagues didn't regard this favourably at all. And, in many cases, not very much developed. How useful what Mabel Larson and I did, was to the students, who had some opportunity to observe it and see the results of our efforts, I scarcely know. I found it pretty difficult to do. In the first place, I don't know that I fully understood what was expected of us. Somehow or other, we were expected to integrate all the subjects. Somehow it was to have arithmetic and spelling in it, social studies, maybe a little science. It was a part of Dr. Dickie's concept of the enterprise, that the students, the pupils, would produce something that was 'visible'. You had to 'make' something. Well, what was available in the schools to make something was pretty small. There were a lot of old apple boxes brought to school which became the foundation of an enterprise on something or other. The schools were not equipped with libraries adequate for dealing with this sort of thing. The children, under the theory as I understood it at the time, with some assistance from the teacher, would decide on what enterprise they were going to develop. Such observations as I made led me to believe that the children almost never brought forth any ideas about an enterprise. The teacher would suggest something and they would end up doing that. So it became teacher originated rather than coming from the pupils.<sup>125</sup>

When asked if, overall, the enterprise was successfully implemented, Swift answered that the answer, as far as he could judge, was no. Swift argued that he had "very good

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<sup>125</sup>Ibid.

reasons for that."<sup>126</sup> First of all, the teachers who were in the classrooms had not experienced any of this training in the Normal Schools. Second, since rural schooling was still primarily of the one-room variety, it was extremely difficult to undertake the enterprise in that school environment. "To have an enterprise going on in grade one and another for grade two, and so on, it was just impossible."<sup>127</sup> Finally, the schools were very inadequately supplied with the library books and tools, and other things that might be needed. Nevertheless, however, Swift thought it did, in some way, have the effect "of making schools a bit more open and made the relationships between pupils and teachers a bit more meaningful than they might previously have been."<sup>128</sup>

Swift noted that the enterprise did not really last very long as an entity in the school system. He remembered thinking at the time, after reading Dickie's work, that he "was rather disappointed in that book."<sup>129</sup> He felt that as a Normal School teacher, and for teachers in the schools, "not a great deal of help would be derived from it."<sup>130</sup>

In this assessment, Swift agreed with the conclusions of

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<sup>126</sup>Ibid.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid.

Patterson<sup>131</sup> with regard to the extent and efficacy of the implementation of "progressive" ideas within the curriculum of the public schools in Alberta. In retrospect, Swift was not alone in his assessment of the new curriculum. By 1938, both Dewey and Boyd Bode, progressive icons conscious of the widespread misinterpretation of their work, published works in the United States criticizing the more extreme forms of progressive education and clarifying their original positions on the subject. According to Patterson, the ready acknowledgement of dependence on British or European sources as a justification for educational change "may also have been a reflection of a Canadian mindfulness and distrust of American extremism in this movement."<sup>132</sup> For example, the British term "enterprise", was more commonly used in Canada than the American "project" to describe the activity program.<sup>133</sup>

In many ways, Swift's assessment of the efficacy of the new approach did not match the enthusiasm of his immediate superior. In reply to Swift's query on May 14, 1941, as to what subject areas ought to be taught to "failed Normal School

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<sup>131</sup>R.S. Patterson "The Establishment of Progressive Education in Alberta", Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1968.

<sup>132</sup>W.H. Patterson, "The Implementation of Progressive Education in Canada", 82.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid., 82.

students",<sup>134</sup> H.C. Newland wrote, rather condescendingly:

I do not like to see so much emphasis placed on 'subject' failures. Is that not keeping alive the old academic tradition? Isn't it possible for your staff to size up these people on their whole record and then determine if additional instruction is necessary and which of the available courses is most likely to help them? In other words, I feel that we have not yet clearly thought our way through the problem of grading Normal School performance. If we believe in integration, it is just possible that our system of normal school credits ought to be discarded.<sup>135</sup>

Obviously, Swift was not the only administrator who had misgivings about the "official point of view." In January of 1942, Swift wrote to Newland:

Some members of the staff here, especially those who are dealing more intimately with the elementary school programme and the Enterprises [sic] are upset over reports which continue to come here from teachers which indicate that the interpretation placed on the programme here is not followed or is opposed by some of the superintendents. While these reports have come in with steady persistence through conversation with ex-students, the matter has been accentuated due to the return of a number of students who, in class discussions, now assert that things cannot be done because they are not permitted or because of contrary instructions. There are two aspects to the problem:

1. Is the programme as it is outlined feasible? It may be that Superintendents working in the more real situation of the rural school find that it cannot be implemented.

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<sup>134</sup>Correspondence, Swift to Newland, May 14, 1941. Department of Education, Calgary and Edmonton Normal Schools, P.A.A., Acc. No. 78.92, Box 2.

<sup>135</sup>Correspondence, Newland to Swift, May 16, 1941. Department of Education, Calgary and Edmonton Normal Schools, P.A.A., Acc. No. 78.92, Box 2.

2. Can we countenance within the Department, in practice, not theory, opposing interpretations . . . , violations or ignoring of the problem [sic]? . . . We should present a common front.<sup>136</sup>

This correspondence reflects not only many of the problems inherent in the implementation of some aspects of progressive education with regard to teacher education, but also reflects Newland's strict adherence to its principles. It also indicates Swift's sometimes strained relationship with him.

When asked for his assessment of the state of teacher education in Alberta in the mid-1930s, Swift replied that he did not think he'd ever been "happy" or content with any educational process. For the period of time that he had been in the Normal Schools, they were largely training teachers who would immediately go to one-room schools. The Normal School was not, according to Swift, well organized to prepare the students to go into one-room schools.<sup>137</sup> He noted that:

Various kinds of expedients were devised. For example, there would be set up in one of the practice school rooms, a one-room school situation with grades from I to VIII. By and large, the parents objected to that, they didn't like it. Being in a city and not out in a farm situation, it wasn't quite the same thing anyway. Various attempts were made to get the students out to the one-room schools for observation and for

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<sup>136</sup>Correspondence, Swift to Newland, January 16, 1942. Calgary and Edmonton Normal Schools, Department of Education, P.A.A., Acc. No. 78.92, Box 2.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid.

practice teaching, and I think that was useful. During the time that I was Inspector in Athabasca, I would be asked by the Edmonton or Camrose Normal Schools to recommend, let us say, six schools in which I thought good work was being done and that I thought the teachers were doing well, and so on. Then, arrangement would be made for a student to come from the Normal School and spend a week, sometimes it was two, in the rural school. The point I'm making is that the students that we had, during that particular time, were not being well trained to go out and face the kind of situation that, in September, they would face. No one, not even I, seemed to be wise enough to figure out some really good way of doing it.<sup>138</sup>

The majority of new teachers, then, would find themselves in the above situation. Swift further noted that, at that time, the Normal School course consisted of one year and he was always of the opinion that it should be extended for two. "Eventually, of course, it was extended to four, but that was after I had anything significant to do with it."<sup>139</sup>

Since the Prairie West was built on immigration, much has been written on the issue of education and ethnicity.<sup>140</sup>

Asked how the issue of ethnicity impinged upon the Normal

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<sup>138</sup>Ibid.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid.

<sup>140</sup>Since this area of scholarship covers such a wide range of topics, the following are offered merely as suitable beginning points for the uninitiated. For the issue of education as an instrument of assimilation and nationalism, see: Neil G. McDonald, "David J. Goggin: Promoter of National Schools", in David C. Jones et al., Shaping the Schools of the Canadian West, (Detselig, 1979), 14-28; N. Kach, "Education and Ethnic Acculturation: A Case Study", in N. Kach et al., Essays on Canadian Education, (Detselig, 1986), 41-60.



Schools, Swift replied that:

The ethnic mix differed from Normal School to Normal School. At Camrose, while I was there, relative to the number of ethnic groups in the population, the percentage of Ukrainians was very high. I think this was because the parents of these young people had a high regard for education. They were first generation Ukrainians, and, as homestead farmers, they were not very well off. They didn't have money during the Depression, to send their children to university. So the Normal School became a place for a large number of them to go. That is the only ethnic group that I can think of, on a large scale. However, I would say, with respect to the Calgary Schools, when I was there, a somewhat similar situation existed with respect to the Mormon people in Southern Alberta. The number of Mormon students that we had, as a ratio of the student body, was greater than the Mormons in the total population. I think much the same reasons applied, and, of course, there was no university in Calgary at the time, nor at Lethbridge. . . I would have to say, that as a group, the Mormon students were outstanding students. They dominated. By that I mean that they played a larger role, in games and sports, they were leaders, in respect to things musical, good singers, and they had leadership qualities. I presumed that these things came about because of the manner in which youth services were organized in Mormon communities. They learned public speaking and, in general, developed leadership qualities. So that on average, they would be slightly above the rest of the student body.<sup>141</sup>

Since, historically, the teaching profession has struggled for recognition among the pantheon of recognized "professionals", acceptable social class was of some concern with regard to future teachers. In 1942, at the height of the Second World War, Swift wrote to Newland:

I enclose herewith a summary which I have just prepared showing the distribution of our students

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<sup>141</sup>Ibid.

according to parental occupation. We have sensed that the cultural background of our students is most inadequate and this has seemed to be especially true this year. . . . However, the summary which is enclosed indicates clearly enough what the cause is. We have but a single student from a professional home and the father in this case is an obscure teacher. Obviously, parents whose places in the economic and social strata are superior do not send their children to us. The reason is obvious. . . . P.S. I have just selected . . . our twenty-two weakest students. Of these, fifteen, or 69 percent are from the farm.<sup>142</sup>

This letter is of interest on a number of fronts. First of all, it reflects a decided ethnocentric bias on the part of an Anglo-dominated educational hierarchy which still perceived itself as under attack by the non-British immigrant bent on altering the status quo. Although couched in terms of "social class" (which, in itself, is a telling comment), it is obvious that during the period under discussion, the term, "professional parents" would have meant, primarily, those of a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant background. It is also noteworthy that even though the larger part of the population were from rural backgrounds, much of the Province's economy still revolving around rural agricultural pursuits, and the destination of the large proportion of those neophyte teachers being rural locales, the "farm" was still seen as an inferior occupation. That this was written during an acute wartime teacher shortage, was even more astounding and a credit to the longevity of this ethnocentric nationalist ethos.

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<sup>142</sup>Correspondence, Swift to Newland, November 20, 1942. P.A.A. Acc. No. 78.92, Box 2.

When asked what effect the Second World War had on the morale of prospective teachers, Swift replied:

I don't have a lot of awareness about that except in one respect. That is, the young men who were in Normal School, and they, of course, were very much in the minority as compared to women, were quite aware that before long, they would probably be in one of the armed services. In fact, they were. One result of that was that most of those men, when they came back from the war, had very generous education benefits and many of them went into other occupations.<sup>143</sup>

With regard to the division of the sexes within the teaching profession, Swift pointed out that when he was in Camrose, which was well before the war time, the ratio would be about one male to two females. By the time he got to Calgary, when the War was already on, the ratio was probably more like one to four.<sup>144</sup> According to Swift, teaching was one profession in which women did not lose ground to men after the War. He argued that because of the generous educational benefits veterans received, "they were either going into some other profession or they were improving their qualifications with respect to teaching, by obtaining a university degree."<sup>145</sup> Although this may have been the case, in terms of the teaching positions themselves, ample evidence exists that women continued to be well behind their male counterparts in terms of salaries, status and access to executive and

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<sup>143</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, July 24, 1996.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid.

administrative positions in the educational hierarchy.<sup>146</sup>

On the topic of all the discussion during this period regarding whether or not Education ought to be included as a university degree, Swift pointed out that he was of the opinion that two years training would be adequate for an elementary school teacher. "I would have wanted a university degree with respect to secondary school teaching."<sup>147</sup>

What was in the wind at that time was that everybody should have a degree. When that ultimately came about, I didn't find myself opposing it. By the time I was in Calgary, we were only training Elementary and Junior High School teachers. By that time, the School of Education had come into existence and High School certificates were obtained at the University of Alberta under [M.E.] LaZerte.<sup>148</sup>

In comparing the correspondence of Swift as Principal of Calgary Normal School and his successor, Manning, it seems obvious that, right from the beginning, Swift was on amicable terms with McNally. The documents indicate, however, that his relationship with Newland was, perhaps, more at arm's length. He was in contact with them as much as he was with the Chief Inspector of Schools, E.L. Fuller, although this may have been because Fuller was ill. This situation may have

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<sup>146</sup>See, for example, N. Sheehan, "Women and Education in Alberta", in N. Kach and K. Mazurek, Exploring Our Educational Past: Schooling in the Northwest Territories and Alberta, (Calgary: Detselig, 1992)

<sup>147</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, July 24, 1996.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid.

inadvertently helped Swift's career. Manning, on the other hand, corresponded almost entirely with the Chief Inspector of Schools who was, by that time, Swift.

Early connections can be seen between Swift and the Deputy Minister Fred McNally by the following series of letters. On June 9, 1941, Swift wrote:

May I express the appreciation of our staff for your address at the closing exercises of Friday last. I regret that you were unable to be with us to the end to see the remainder of our programme. Please accept my personal apologies for not being more attentive to you. When I tried to reach you during the evening, you had already checked out.<sup>149</sup>

McNally replied, June 17, 1941:

It was very kind of you to write as you did on June 9. I felt very much ashamed at having to leave in the midst of your programme last Friday. It was a disappointment to me . . . I was well taken care of after . . . and returned home on the midnight train. You need never worry about attentions for me personally. If I have free time I always get in touch with somebody and inflict myself on them until it is time to do something else and you are slated to be the recipient . . . in the near future."<sup>150</sup>

Another letter to Newland, in June of 1942 seems to indicate that Swift was by now aware of his rise in status and shows some, albeit officious sounding, compassion for his staff.

Mr. A.G. Bagley representing the staffs of the

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<sup>149</sup>Correspondence, Swift to McNally, June 9, 1941. Normal Schools, Calgary, Edmonton. Department of Education, P.A.A., 79.92, Box 2.

<sup>150</sup>Correspondence McNally to Swift, June 17, 1949. P.A.A., Acc. No. 79.92, Box 2.

two Practice Schools has written me asking for my support of their request to the Department for an increase in the amount of practice teacher bonus. It would seem to me that the request has some merit in that the present rate is one which was set a great many years ago. . . . As I have pointed out to Mr. Bagley, it is a difficult thing to arrive at the proper level for the bonus due to the fact that there is a basic salary paid by the school board and the fluctuation of the degree of demand upon the school at different times of the year. However, I am of the opinion that they are justified in asking for some upward revision of the present rate of remuneration.<sup>151</sup>

#### Chief Inspector of Schools

In November of 1942, after a considerable illness, E.L. Fuller, Chief Inspector of Schools, passed away. Swift went to Edmonton for the funeral and also some consultation with H.C. Newland, then Supervisor of Schools. Swift had no sooner returned to Calgary when he had a telephone call from the Deputy Minister, McNally, asking him to return immediately to Edmonton. In Edmonton, he quickly found himself in a session with McNally and Newland. According to Swift, very quickly, he was asked whether he would be interested in becoming Chief Inspector of Schools. Swift recalled that:

This came as a considerable surprise to me in that, having gone to the Normal Schools side of things for nearly seven years, I had left the staff of inspectors and high school inspectors from which the successor would logically come. In any event, after consultation with Mary, I accepted. Again we

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<sup>151</sup>Correspondence, Swift to Newland, June 11, 1942. Calgary and Edmonton Normal Schools, Department of Education. P.A.A. Acc. No. 78.92, Box 2..

were involved in relocating, house searching and moving.<sup>152</sup>

While his appointment was officially January 1, he was expected to come to Edmonton forthwith, the work of the Chief's office being badly behind. Swift later recalled that one of the most unusual conversations he had ever listened to occurred after he had been offered the position and tentatively accepted. McNally and Newland apparently proceeded to discuss why various other employees had been passed over. "I thought this conversation in my presence was a bit out of place!"<sup>153</sup>

In November 1942 when Swift entered the senior staff of the Department of Education there were only three professional officers. The Deputy Minister was chief advisor to the Minister, had general supervision over all the activities of the Department, and had a number of branches reporting directly to him. These were the School Book Branch, the Correspondence School, the Provincial Institute of Technology and Art in Calgary, the Registrar, and the General Office with its variety of responsibilities. There was also a Departmental Secretary and a Correspondence Clerk. The Supervisor of Schools was responsible for curriculum, textbook selection, examinations and the Normal Schools. He was also responsible for the Department's Summer School which was

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<sup>152</sup>W.H. Swift, unpublished memoirs, n.d.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid.

operated jointly with the University Summer Session, and, according to Swift, provided a variety of courses purporting to improve teaching, and patronized by some one thousand teacher-students.

That the position of Chief Superintendent was considered key in the interpretation and practical application of educational policy was not only recognized by the Department of Education, but also acknowledged by the rank and file. The Alberta Teachers' Association Magazine pointed out in 1943 that "no position in the Department of Education nor in the educational system lent itself more to exerting beneficent influence on that system."<sup>154</sup> The teachers' publication went on to point out that no individual can be so much in touch with the "field men"<sup>155</sup> - the superintendents and inspectors. These were the "immediate officers for interpreting the course of studies and inspiring, or otherwise, the rank and file in the classroom."<sup>156</sup> In the rather whiggish "onward and upward" style of prose popular in the educational writing of the day, the magazine proclaimed that:

The Chief Inspector of Schools should and must serve as a flaming torch, so to speak, setting afire with enthusiasm each inspector ploughing his own lonely furrow within his respective territory.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>154</sup>The A.T.A. Magazine, January, 1943. 16-17

<sup>155</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>156</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>157</sup>Ibid., 16.



Bill Swift, as the Chief Inspector, had under his jurisdiction the staff of inspectors of schools located throughout the province and was generally responsible for the operation of all school boards in so far as their problems came within the responsibility of the Department. Swift noted that "this involved much correspondence and the visiting of local areas to help sort out problems."<sup>158</sup>

According to Swift:

I inherited a staff of two office workers. Lutie Jessup who had been there for some time was a great help to me. Anecdotally it may be observed that one of their chief concerns in receiving me as their new boss concerned how I would conclude my letters. From time immemorial, inherited from Britain, a civil servant, regardless of the contents of his letter concluded with 'Your obedient servant'. This had been Mr. Fuller's practice. I abandoned it as being obsolete and stuffy, using 'Yours truly'.<sup>159</sup>

There was a considerable accumulation of business awaiting Swift's attention. He recalled two items particularly. In 1942 the federal government had removed Japanese citizens and Canadian citizens of Japanese origin from the British Columbia coast to locations inland. This action was prompted by the rapid progress of the Japanese in the Pacific after Pearl Harbour. There were fears of invasion and a presumption, however misguided, that in the event of this happening, the ethnic Japanese might be sympathetic and

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<sup>158</sup>W.H. Swift, Unpublished Memoirs, n.d.

<sup>159</sup>Ibid.

helpful to the invaders. Similar action was taken in the United States. Swift pointed out that:

This action, especially with respect to Japanese who were actually Canadian citizens became controversy for some 50 years. I think I would be correct in saying that the action of the government was regarded as desirable. Regrettably in the stress and confusions of war much that was actually done was grossly inhuman.<sup>160</sup>

The federal government accepted a responsibility for the provision of schooling for the children of these displaced families. Many were in southern Alberta where they could work in the sugar beet and other irrigated areas. The federal government paid the province a sum per child but it was the responsibility of the province to make the necessary arrangements for local school boards to take the children into their schools and to distribute the money.

It was here that Swift became involved. Apparently nothing had been done about this, so Swift found himself meeting with school boards to get the children into schools and to work out the process of money distribution.<sup>161</sup> This was complicated by the fact that "in some cases a few children could be put into existing schools at little or no extra expense, while in other cases the numbers were so much larger that space and

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<sup>160</sup>Ibid. For a thorough treatment of this issue see: Ann Gomer Sunahara, The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians During the Second World War, (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1981).

<sup>161</sup>Ibid.

equipment had to be found and additional teachers employed."<sup>162</sup> Eventually everything was settled satisfactorily.

Related to this incident, an interesting episode occurred a year later. Swift recalled that:

The supervisor of examinations reported to me that in one school division the highest grade IX marks had been scored by a Japanese. Was she to be awarded the Governor-General's medal? The question simply was that, in a sense, she was not a true resident of the division. I took the position that she was entitled to it and so recommended to the Minister who agreed. This was all handled quietly and no complaint reached us.<sup>163</sup>

The other immediate problem also had to do with distribution of money. According to Swift's recollection the reorganization of the small local school districts into the large school divisions was well along. However, no system had been put in place for paying grants to them, especially with respect to the quite substantial increase in grant money that had developed. According to Swift, "the process was to receive the budgets and financial statements and pay to each out of the pot by ministerial 'special grants', whatever seemed to be appropriate."<sup>164</sup> Obviously some formula had to be devised. A major stumbling block was that there had not yet been put in place any form of uniform assessment procedure. This would be essential to a fair comparison of

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<sup>162</sup>Ibid.

<sup>163</sup>Ibid.

<sup>164</sup>Ibid.

ability to pay taxes. Swift pointed out that it showed up especially in the assessments of towns, many of which had joined school divisions by agreement. Their assessment procedures, apparently, varied substantially.<sup>165</sup>

According to Swift:

I consulted with the Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs and found that they faced a similar problem with respect to grants. He had developed what he called an empirical formula which had no force in law, taking into account a number of factors. I adopted his formula and became much more satisfied with my further distribution. It was still quite a number of years before the province put into law a plan of assessment procedures operating province-wide.<sup>166</sup>

By far the greatest proportion of the correspondence pertaining to Swift's career as Chief Inspector revolved around the acute teacher shortages during the War.

According to a pamphlet produced by the Department of Education, "War Emergency Teacher-Training Programme, 1942-1945", in regard to teacher shortages due to enlistments and other exigencies:

. . . nevertheless every effort must be made to maintain the morale of our schools during this struggle for democracy by offering to the boys and girls of Alberta the best educational service that is possible under present conditions . . . by encouraging as many high-school students as possible to enter the normal schools.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>165</sup>Ibid.

<sup>166</sup>Ibid,

<sup>167</sup>Pamphlet published by the Department of Education, War Emergency Teacher-Training Programme, 1942-1943. Department of Education Files, Teacher Training, P.A.A., Acc. No. 77.169,

The pamphlet went on to note that:

Women teachers, especially, can make a patriotic contribution to an essential public service by remaining in their class rooms during the year 1942-1943. There will be a special need for teachers who are properly qualified for high school work.<sup>168</sup>

Special sessions, the lowering of standards, and the renewal of lapsed certificates were just some of the measures taken to deal with this emergency.<sup>169</sup>

The shortage of teachers was a chronic problem in Alberta and was not strictly confined to Wartime, as has been well documented by Patterson.<sup>170</sup> As late as 1954, an "Emergency Teacher-Training Act" was also instituted. These regulations also had as their main feature a shortened training period and recommendations for the renewal of lapsed certificates.<sup>171</sup>

Swift recalled that during this period, often the best students would be sent out to practice teach and simply stay on in their new positions.<sup>172</sup> Regarding the shortened teacher training period, Swift wrote to Newland in February of 1943:

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Box 1, File 11.

<sup>168</sup>Ibid.

<sup>169</sup>Ibid.

<sup>170</sup>R. Patterson, "History of Teacher Education in Alberta". 196.

<sup>171</sup>Circular outlining the "Emergency Teacher-Training Act of 1954". Teacher-Training, Department of Education, P.A.A., Acc. No. 77.169, Box 1, File 14.

<sup>172</sup>W.H. Swift, unpublished memoirs, n.d.

It was my understanding that the six boys selected need not return to Normal School and they were so informed. This seemed justified since their total period in the Normal School was as great (4.5 months) as these who will now return will have been in attendance. They were the brightest in the class and would have been sent out last fall had we decided not to keep our boys' class intact.<sup>173</sup>

Eventually, as the shortages became even more acute, even the untrained "best and brightest" were not sufficient. G.F. Manning, Swift's successor at Calgary Normal wrote to Swift regarding the identical issue in March of the same year:

At the moment we will only be able to send out five trainees and we feel that these students should be sent out to take charge of schools which are presently closed because the previous trainees have returned to Normal School. All five of these students will be very weak teachers and incapable of handling any other than schools in which the discipline problem will not be a serious one.<sup>174</sup>

The severity of the shortage and its effect on rural school districts was illustrated by correspondence between Superintendent C.B. Johnson to Swift early in 1943:

I have now received word from the Secretary Treasurer of the Calais School Division . . . to the effect that this school will continue staying closed unless a student teacher is willing to teach in this district. The bonus

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<sup>173</sup>Correspondence, Swift to Newland, February 17, 1943. Calgary and Edmonton Normal Schools, Department of Education, P.A.A., Acc. No. 78.92, Box 2.

<sup>174</sup>Correspondence, G.F. Manning, Principal, Calgary Normal School, to Swift, March 16, 1943. Edmonton and Calgary Normal Schools, Department of Education. P.A.A. Acc. No. 78.92, Box 2.

amounts to \$200.00.<sup>175</sup>

According to the request form that accompanied this correspondence, the school referred to was 50 miles from the nearest rail station. The teacher could travel there with the mailman who left every Tuesday morning. Room and board could be arranged for between twenty-five and thirty dollars. Enrolment in grades I-IX was 49. The students were behind in their education, although the intermediate grades all took correspondence.<sup>176</sup>

Given some of the working conditions and the extreme shortage of qualified instructors, experienced teachers often found themselves in superior bargaining positions. Desperate for even the most raw recruits, districts offered enticing incentives for the more remote schools. The following letter from the Superintendent of the Fairview District demonstrated this to Swift:

The refusal of Miss Florence to take Lubeck . . . has placed us in a very awkward predicament. . . . This leaves us with two districts which are desperately in need of service, . . . Eureka River and Lubeck. Lubeck has been a good district for trainees for the past year, and should prove acceptable to one now. There is a good boarding place and a reasonably good school. There are no disciplinary problems. Can you secure us at

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<sup>175</sup>Correspondence, C.B. Johnson to Swift, January 7, 1943. Edmonton Normal School general correspondence, Department of Education. P.A.A. Acc. No. 78.92, Box 1.

<sup>176</sup>Correspondence, C.B. Johnson to Swift, January 7, 1943. Teacher Request Form. Edmonton Normal School general correspondence, Department of Education. P.A.A. Acc. No. 78.92, Box 1.

least one more trainee for one of these places?  
Lubeck carries a \$150.00 bonus and Eureka River,  
\$200.00.<sup>177</sup>

According to the moral standards of the day and the fact that most Normalites were female, it is not surprising that the patriarchal double standard was much in evidence. For example, in November of 1944, Superintendent L.A. Broughton wrote to Swift:

I am perturbed over a situation that has occurred twice and perhaps three times in this Division during the last year. Namely, that the young Normal School trainees are not all living up to the highest in moral standards as we understand them. The junior teacher at Hyllo . . . was married in the latter part of July and expects confinement in January. Last week I learned that the teacher at Owl River, . . . is in similar difficulties but that her 'lover' will not marry her. Incidentally, she asked for permission to go to Edmonton today . . . I presume there is not much, if anything, that I can do directly but the thought crossed my mind that certain lady instructors at the Normal Schools might have sessions with the young girls and give them suitable advice. Wartime creates unnatural situations and modern conceptions on this matter tend toward greater liberalism, I know . . .<sup>178</sup>

Asked to reminisce, in 1981, about his association with the University of Alberta at this time, Swift noted that while his contacts during this period were minimal, there was one incident that stood out. Prior to the 1942 revisions of the

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<sup>177</sup>Correspondence, W.R. Dean to Swift, November 2, 1943. Edmonton Normal School general correspondence, Department of Education. P.A.A. Acc. No. 78.92, Box 1.

<sup>178</sup>Correspondence, L.A. Broughton to Swift, November 11, 1944. Edmonton Normal School general correspondence, Department of Education. P.A.A. Acc. No. 78.92, Box 1.



University Act there was a biennial election of members to the Senate by the graduates of the university. Vacancies were advertised and the nominations were to be received by the registrar. According to Swift, within his staff there developed a proposal to nominate Dr. W.D. McDougall, one of their colleagues. Swift remembered that:

In due course the names of the nominees were made public. In addition to McDougall, there had been named H.C. Newland and a third person also from the educational establishment. The Calgary Herald produced an editorial alleging that there had developed a conspiracy among educationalists to control the Senate. This was nonsense. In the first place, the Senate was a large body which three members could not possibly control. Secondly, they had to be elected by democratic process. Actually,<sup>179</sup> there had not been the slightest collaboration!

In the end, the matter became of little significance for there was soon set into motion a study which led in 1942 to a complete reconstitution of the Senate, both in terms of powers and membership.<sup>180</sup>

Swift, through his position as Chief Inspector of Schools for the Province of Alberta, once again, the most junior of his fellow bureaucrats to hold such a position, now found himself as the chief liaison between the superintendents and the Normal Schools. In just fourteen years since his first teaching assignment, he had risen to a position within the educational bureaucracy of the Province few rural teachers

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<sup>179</sup>W.H. Swift, The University and I, 13-14.

<sup>180</sup>Ibid., 13-14.

would have dreamed to aspire to. He had proven extremely adept at recognizing opportunity and seizing the initiative.

As the A.T.A. Magazine declared:

Dr. Swift's unimpeded progress from the bottom to the top rung of the ladder has been markedly rapid. He has been highly respected for his efficiency and sterling worth, both as a man and as a teacher . . .<sup>181</sup>

Swift's diligence and enterprise had not gone unnoticed by his superiors, as his rapid promotion at such a young age attests. Bill Swift, Ph.D. was obviously perceived by his superiors as a talent on the rise, and his loyalty to those who afforded him these opportunities was to be duly recognized.

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<sup>181</sup>The A.T.A. Magazine, January, 1943, 16-17.

## CHAPTER V DEPUTY MINISTER OF EDUCATION

Bill Swift, almost from the day he stepped into his first classroom, had been recognized by those in authority, as having a talent for the administrative end of the educational endeavour. His rapid promotion from teacher to inspector of schools, from instructor at Camrose Normal to Principal at the Calgary Normal School testified to this proclivity. By 1942, just fourteen years after receiving his teaching certificate, Swift had been named Chief Inspector of Schools for the Province of Alberta, junior only to the Minister and Deputy Minister of Education. He was now only 39 years of age. However, Swift was not through; just three years later he was appointed Chief Superintendent<sup>1</sup>, and a year later, in 1946, Deputy Minister of Education, chosen over the apparent successor, the highly respected H.C. Newland. This chapter will examine Swift's time as Deputy Minister, 1946-1966, with an eye towards scrutinizing the circumstances which surrounded his final promotion, and the day to day activities of the job itself.

For Alberta, the end of the Second World War brought a new outlook and a new leader. Ernest Manning, took over the premiership upon the death of Aberhart in 1943. He served as premier for twenty-five years, seeing the province through

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<sup>1</sup>It should be noted that this was really simply a change of title. It had been decided in 1945, that the Chief Inspector's position should be changed to Chief Superintendent.

years of prosperity and tremendous population growth. He also saw the Social Credit party through its transformation from a radical movement to a conservative defender of free enterprise. In 1947 Manning purged the party of its older Social Credit hardliners. The anti-semitism of the Social Credit Board, a hardline thinktank established by Aberhart in 1937, and several members of the provincial and federal parties had become increasingly embarrassing to the post-war government. The result of the purge was the creation of a party which appealed to mainstream, conservative voters.<sup>2</sup>

According to von Heyking, Manning presided over a government with a reputation for fiscal prudence through times of relative prosperity. Despite the fears of many that the experience of war would again be followed by economic recession, the late 1940s and early 1950s instead ushered in an era of opportunity because of the oil boom and the related discovery of more natural gas reserves.<sup>3</sup>

The overwhelming desire of returning veterans, those who had spent the war on the homefront, and new immigrants to the province, was "for an opportunity to enjoy the new economic prosperity."<sup>4</sup> Along with this were increased calls for a modern education "which would help students prepare for their

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<sup>2</sup>von Heyking, 213-14.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 214.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 215.

role in the new society".<sup>5</sup>

### The Deputy Minister

According to Swift, his promotion to Deputy Minister had a rather "peculiar" beginning.<sup>6</sup> At the time, the Minister of Education was Earl Ansley, a member of the Social Credit Government. Swift pointed out that "there were only three really professional persons in the Department at that time, McNally and Newland and myself,"<sup>7</sup> all under the Minister of Education. According to Swift's recollection:

Well I don't suppose I thought much about it but I certainly would have assumed that Newland, being considerably more experienced and superior to me in various ways, would be appointed Deputy Minister, because McNally was about to retire. [However] . . . one day I was in the Minister's office . . . on some other matter, and he said, 'before you go, there's something I want to tell you . . . I've just informed Dr. Newland, that he will not be made Deputy Minister. I don't think he said anything more than that. [However], . . . that having been said, unless they brought someone in from the outside, obviously, I was the one available for promotion to Deputy Minister.'<sup>8</sup>

Swift pointed out that it was well known, at that time, that McNally was in the process of retiring. Sure enough, on April 1, 1946, Swift was appointed Deputy Minister of Education for the Province of Alberta. Almost immediately

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 215.

<sup>6</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, May 13, 1994.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

upon learning that he would not be considered, Newland abruptly resigned. Swift noted that after all the years in the "second spot"<sup>9</sup>, Dr. Newland was now passed over for the top chair. "I'd never heard him say so, but the failure to give him the symbolic reins of leadership for the last few years of his career must have hurt him deeply".<sup>10</sup> Reminiscing on the subject, Swift remembered that:

Newland was an extremely vigorous man, an extremely capable man. But he was a very independent person. He was called Supervisor of Schools and chiefly was Director of Curriculum and Head of Examinations and related things. He, along with J.W. Barnett of the Alberta Teachers' Association, and M.E. LaZerte, Dean of Education, that little group constituted the people really in charge of education. In theory there were curriculum committees and so on, but they weren't meeting. Newland told me once: 'What's the good of bringing these people in, they don't have anything to say!' As far as the Department was concerned, it was run by Newland, even though McNally was his superior. Ansley said to me, 'I never know what's going on in the Curriculum Branch until I read it in the newspapers, and I told Dr. Newland that he cannot be Deputy Minister.'<sup>11</sup>

It is of interest that Newland's biographer, P.E. Oviatt, relied almost entirely on the recollections of Swift in her assessment of Newland's resignation. In an interview in 1970, Swift recalled that the incompatibility between Ansley and Dr. Newland had several causes. First, Newland, even though he

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<sup>9</sup>W.H. Swift as quoted in Patricia E. Oviatt, "The Educational Contributions of H.C. Newland" Unpublished M.Ed. Thesis, University of Alberta, 1970. 161.

<sup>10</sup>P.E. Oviatt, 161.

<sup>11</sup>W.H. Swift, Unpublished Memoirs, n.d.

was not politically active while serving with the Department of Education, "was known as one who had socialistic tendencies".<sup>12</sup> (This "malady" had, apparently, not infected Swift!)<sup>13</sup> The Minister, on the other hand, was very anti-socialist. This in itself may have provided some cause for incompatibility. Second, Swift continued:

Ansley, of necessity, was politically minded, being concerned with the attitudes of the public. As such, he was a rather cautious person and consequently was somewhat disturbed by Newland's desire to keep pushing ahead, to do more and different things in education.<sup>14</sup>

In the same interview Swift speculated that a basic philosophic impasse may have existed between Ansley and Newland.

It has been suggested . . . that with Mr. Ansley came a philosophic challenge to Dr. Newland's concept of education. Education was no longer to be strictly the hard, intellectual, rational process that . . . Newland had conceived it to be. Rather, it was to include something called 'spiritual values' which Mr. Ansley regarded as essential to education in a Christian society. In view of Newland's devotion to critical thinking and 'honest intellectualism', spiritual values were

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<sup>12</sup> P.E. Oviatt, "The Educational Contributions of H.C. Newland", unpublished M.Ed. Thesis, University of Alberta, 1970, 157.

<sup>13</sup> Swift was apparently never particularly forthcoming with his political views. His preferences being unknown even to his son, Glen, according to a conversation on January 22, 1998. In fact, the only intimation we have are R.H. McKinnon's secondhand comment. He divulged that: "Bill Swift was a Liberal, Tim Byrne once told me!" Personal interview January 26, 1998.

<sup>14</sup>p.E.Oviatt, 157.

not something to which he would be sympathetic.<sup>15</sup> As well, Swift pointed out that, from his point of view, Newland did not have a high regard for consulting the public, or even consulting other educators. "He kept things pretty well under his thumb".<sup>16</sup> He also hypothesised that the opportunity to work with the newly elected CCF in Saskatchewan may also have been a factor in Newland's abrupt resignation.<sup>17</sup>

Added to all this, was the fact that Ansley appointed his own man, M.L. Watts, to the position of Director of Curriculum on July 3, 1945, thus effectively challenging Newland's educational philosophy. Newland resigned his position six days later.<sup>18</sup>

It must be added, of course, that change was in the air throughout Canadian society as a whole and education was no exception. A year previous, the Second World War had ended, and as Chalmers so aptly put it, "Albertans optimistically faced a future of whose dimensions even these buoyant people had absolutely no concept."<sup>19</sup> Important changes in the structure of the Department of Education were implemented in 1945. It was organized into two main divisions, Administration and Instruction, which, with some variation,

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid. 159.

<sup>16</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 17, 1994.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid. 162.

<sup>18</sup>Oviatt, 159-160.

<sup>19</sup>Chalmers, Schools of the Foothills Province, 120.



have continued to the present day. According to Chalmers, the change was significant in that "curriculum construction and classroom supervision of teaching were at last united under the same officer."<sup>20</sup>

Asked to comment on his overall relations with McNally and Newland, Swift pointed out that his relations with McNally were "extremely good".<sup>21</sup> He noted that:

McNally had a good opinion of me and I of him. He was a very able man, a very affable man, he was a very comfortable man to be with. He was a good public relations person within the Department dealing with trustees and teachers and whatever [sic].<sup>22</sup>

It is not surprising that the two should have got on. Their backgrounds in education and administration were strikingly similar. After teaching in the public schools, McNally became a School Inspector. Later, he was principal of the Camrose Normal School.<sup>23</sup> This was an institution for which both Swift and McNally had fond memories. Likewise, the two directed the Edmonton Summer School, McNally in 1918.<sup>24</sup> After seventeen years as Supervisor of Schools, McNally became Deputy Minister of Education in 1935. Both Swift and McNally received Master's degrees from the University of Alberta and

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 120.

<sup>21</sup>Personal Interview with W.H. Swift, May 13, 1994.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>H.T. Coutts, B.E. Walker eds., G. Fred, The Story of G. Fred McNally, (Don Mills: J.M. Dent & Sons Limited, 1964), 46-47.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 96.

pursued doctoral studies in the United States, although McNally did not complete his at Columbia University.<sup>25</sup> The two men attended UNESCO conferences overseas sponsored by the Canadian Education Association and were both past presidents and district governors of Rotary International.<sup>26</sup>

On the topic of Newland, however, the situation was different:

Now with Newland, we worked, in a sense, side by side under McNally. But we didn't have a great deal to do with each other. I respected him greatly for his capacities and his vigour. He never walked slowly but he was always busy, and so I had respect for him. Now I did not respect him in one regard. He was authoritarian and I can illustrate that by saying this. On one occasion, we were having the annual meeting of the school superintendents and Dr. Newland spoke to this group. He spoke to them very authoritatively about what they had to do, and so on. Without that much discussion about it or anything, just that this was what you were to do. I happened to walk out the door with McNally for lunch. McNally said, 'It takes a good socialist to be a good authoritarian'.(Laughs)<sup>27</sup>

Newland's background in education took a much different route to that of Swift and McNally. Unlike the former two, he spent much more time at the "sharp end" of the endeavour. Much of his early career was spent teaching at various locations throughout Alberta and Saskatchewan. Very early in his career he became actively engaged as a spokesperson for

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 39-43.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 77-79.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

the solidarity of struggling teachers.<sup>28</sup> Newland served variously as President of the Alberta Teachers' Alliance (A.T.A.), Editor of the A.T.A. Magazine, and President of the Canadian Teachers' Federation. Like Swift and McNally, Newland pursued higher education in the United States, earning his doctorate at the University of Chicago. After short terms instructing in the Normal Schools, and serving in the inspectorate, eventually as Chief Inspector, Newland became Chief Superintendent of Schools, succeeding McNally at that position in 1935. It was in this capacity, according to Oviatt, that his prodigious influence on educational change in Alberta was most visible.<sup>29</sup>

Regarding his relations with the Minister, Swift replied that:

[He] . . . got along very well with Ansley. He was a very, very staunch Social Creditor in the original meaning of that word, and he would talk quite a bit about what was going to be done. However, as far as my relations with him were concerned, they were just the same as any other Department Minister. At first, I was fearful that he would sort of force me into being an active and observable Social Creditor because my attitude was that as a civil servant, I was completely neutral in the political sense. [Fortunately], . . . that's the way he allowed me to operate.<sup>30</sup>

Swift elaborated on this issue further. In his experience, the first four or five years with the Department

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<sup>28</sup>p.E. Oviatt, 3-4.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

as Inspector of Schools, during the U.F.A. period, and in the rest of his career under the Social Credit government, "politics played no part . . . as far as [he] was concerned".<sup>31</sup>

This phenomenon was confirmed in a recent study by David A. Kales, which dealt with the issue of bureaucracy and the state in Alberta.<sup>32</sup> More specifically, on the issue of departmental changeovers when new political parties took power, Kales wrote:

One department in particular seemed to have absolutely no political relationship with the governing regime. Senior bureaucrats and civil servants within the Department of Education appear to have been appointed according to merit and advancement . . . . Appointments which were made by previous administrations remained firmly in place. Moreover, the fact that two Premiers (Rutherford and Aberhart) held the Educational portfolio at the same time as their premierships does not reflect upon the suggested politicization of the department. In both cases, the Deputy Ministers assumed total control of the Department. Both had risen through the ranks of the Department, and served long tenures as deputy ministers.<sup>33</sup>

R.H. McKinnon, Swift's last Minister of Education, confirmed this system of appointment by merit:

Yes, always appointed by what you could do rather than your politics. As a matter of fact, if you were a Socred, you had to be twice as good to get the job! That was [Premier] Manning's thing and he

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>David A. Kales, "Servants, Masters or Guardians of the State? State Formation and Bureaucratic Change Within the Provincial State, Alberta, 1905-1975", (Unpublished Manuscript, 1994).

<sup>33</sup>Kales, 21.

was absolutely solid on that - do not use political patronage for appointments!<sup>34</sup>

When asked if his father ever discussed his politics during the period he was Deputy, Glenn Swift replied:

No! He made it very clear that he was extremely careful not to say anything about politics. He did say that he had tremendous respect for Mr. Manning. He might have wondered if he should say that at all because that might be construed as being pro-Social Credit, but I guess after he retired he thought 'well its o.k. now'[sic]. . . Even after he retired, he still wouldn't say. I think though that he realized that the fundamental principles of Social Credit were a bit suspect. However, Ernest Manning could have led any kind of party successfully [sic].<sup>35</sup>

This point of view was not restricted to Swift, however. According to Giles, political neutrality is at the very core of the British civil service tradition. Dating from the civil service in Queen Victoria's reign, civil servants are meant to be non-political, in the sense that they are not elected and do not take an active role in party politics or public controversy.<sup>36</sup> This does not mean that they are not political beings, nor insensitive to issues. Rather, while civil servants are engaged in policy making, they are encouraged or required to maintain a low profile and allow the elected office holders to speak out. "The object is to maintain a

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<sup>34</sup>Personal interview with R.H. McKinnon, January 26, 1998.

<sup>35</sup>Personal interview with Glen Swift, January 22, 1998.

<sup>36</sup>Giles, 187.

vener of impartiality as civil servants before the public."<sup>37</sup>

Several issues brought out in the foregoing merit discussion. First of all, although Swift was, undoubtedly neutral in the political sense, he, Ansley and McNally had similar values in common. Swift must have wrestled with the contradiction between his spiritual beliefs and his pragmatic-empirical educational background. One gets the impression that Swift could not bring himself to make the full leap to the Deweyan form of liberal theology. Certainly, if Swift could not, the whole idea must have been an accursed one to the Baptist, McNally. Given this, Ansley, an ardent Socred, and Swift, might have reached some agreement on the relative roles of church and state in terms of public education. To further complicate the issue, there was the impression, pointed out earlier by Swift, that a small cadre of elite intellectuals were "really in charge of education".<sup>38</sup> This might easily have helped cement the relationship between McNally, Swift, and later, Ansley. There also remained Newland's seemingly unshakable allegiance to socialist ideology, an anathema to post-war Social Credit doctrine. Finally, this may have been part of the beginning of an intellectual backlash against the tenets of progressive

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<sup>37</sup>Richard Rose, "The Political Status of Higher Civil Servants in Britain", in Ezra N. Suleiman ed., Bureaucrats and Policymaking: A Comparative Overview, (New York: Holmes and Meir, 1984), 139.

<sup>38</sup>W.H. Swift, unpublished memoirs, n.d.

education. This was to come to a head in the early 1950s with the publication of the writings of those such as Hilda Neatby and W. G. Hardy.<sup>39</sup> The issue culminated with the publication in 1959 of the report of the Cameron Commission, a report with which Swift was ultimately involved.

When describing the duties of the Deputy Minister of Education, Swift pointed out that the number one responsibility would be to operate the Department. As Deputy Minister, Swift was responsible for seeing that the Department operated as smoothly and as properly as possible. So the persona was that of a "take charge person", although "not a dictatorial one".<sup>40</sup> Number two, of course, was to show some leadership with respect to education itself. That, however, was not an area in which the Deputy Minister had supremacy, "because senior to him was the Minister, and below him were his senior officers."<sup>41</sup> This description was elaborated further by a Canadian Educational Association circular regarding the Deputy Minister of Education. It noted that the position is the top ranking civil servant in a typical Department of Education.

He carries out the policy enunciated by the Minister. As an expert in education, he also advises the Minister on policy and determines, in large measure, the

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<sup>39</sup>Hilda Neatby, So Little For the Mind, (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Company, 1953); D.G. Hardy, Education in Alberta, (Edmonton: University of Alberta, n.d.).

<sup>40</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, May 13, 1994.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

continuing policy of the Department since he retains his position when the governments change.<sup>42</sup>

R.H. McKinnon clarified Swift's particular role:

[the Deputy Minister is] . . . the responsible guy for doing what the Minister says has to be done. The Minister is the representative of the Government of the day. If it was a Cabinet decision he [Swift] never, ever attempted to give . . . direction. Swift would say, 'if you're going to do that, then we should look at this and this . . .', if that's the direction you are going to go [sic]. He would set out what legislation needed to be done, if that was what was required. He had a great way about doing that.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, Joseph Rousseau in his examination of the role of Deputy Ministers of Education in the Western provinces, found that the Deputy takes responsibility for internal administration and supervision in the Department of Education. As well, "the Deputy Minister exercises many of the powers and performs many of the duties designated by legislative prescription to the Minister." The Deputy's duties included, "advising, conferring, consulting, coordinating, directing, encouraging, influencing, and warning."<sup>44</sup>

A typical exchange between the Minister and his Deputy might be the following correspondence from Swift to the then Minister, A.O. Aalborg:

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<sup>42</sup>Canadian Educational Association circular entitled: "The Structure of Public Education in Canada". Dated May 2, 1947. P.A.A. Acc. No. 79.334, Box 11, File 91.

<sup>43</sup>Personal interview with R.H. McKinnon, January 26, 1998.

<sup>44</sup>Joseph G. Rousseau, Jr., "Some Aspects of the Role of Selected Deputy Ministers of Education", M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1968, 169.



Attached is an outline of the material we propose to use as a basis for a memorandum to school boards about the computation of 1955 grants. Do you approve it?<sup>45</sup>

Aalborg wrote across this memo in reply: "Memorandum to school boards hereby approved".<sup>46</sup> Another example of the Minister's dependence on the Deputy would be the following memo from Minister, Ivan Casey. This was with regard to a report referred to by F.K. Stewart, Executive Secretary of the Canadian Education Association (hereafter referred to as the C.E.A.) in a letter to Swift pertaining to a questionnaire on the "Duration and Extension of Compulsory Schooling".<sup>47</sup> Casey sent a memo to Swift: "Can you give me any lead as to our positions on the matter?"<sup>48</sup> To which Swift replied: "You may care to scan these minutes of C.E.A. Directors' meeting".<sup>49</sup>

In general, the duties revolved around acting as a go-between from the Minister to others in the Department. Swift was quick to point out, however, that he "never took offence when the Minister would call in someone below me in the Department for a discussion about something, but it would

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<sup>45</sup>Correspondence, Swift to A.O. Aalborg, Feb. 22, 1955. Department of Education, P.A.A., Acc. 79.288, Box 1, File 7b.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Correspondence, F.K. Stewart to Swift, October 26, 1950. P.A.A. Acc. No. 79.334, Box 11, File No. 94.

<sup>48</sup>Correspondence, Ivan Casey to Swift, October 26, 1950. P.A.A. Acc. No. 79.334, Box 11, File No. 94.

<sup>49</sup>Correspondence, Swift to Ivan Casey, October 26, 1950. P.A.A. Acc. No. 79.334, Box 11, File No. 94.

usually be not something affecting policy; it would be something about what was going on in a particular locality or something of a less important nature".<sup>50</sup>

It was also Swift's responsibility to recommend staff appointments. These seem to have been based, for the most part, upon seniority and qualification.<sup>51</sup> According to Swift he felt "extremely fortunate to serve [his] deputy ministership under a government that rarely made decisions or gave directions based on political considerations as opposed to the perceived merits of the case".<sup>52</sup>

With regard to his working relationship with the Minister, Swift pointed out that:

In essence the Minister was a member of the Government, attended cabinet meetings, which a Deputy Minister never did. He was involved in the work of the Department primarily on matters of policy and in receiving deputations of various sorts. With respect to the latter the deputy was usually asked to be present.<sup>53</sup>

The Deputy Minister, Swift went on, served as Chief Executive Officer of the Department as an operational entity. All members of the staff reported to him, directly or through their immediate superiors.<sup>54</sup> Propositions or

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>W.H. Swift, unpublished memoirs, n.d.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>A breakdown of the Alberta Department of Education, as of 1946, appears in Appendix "A".

proposals arising from within the department were considered initially by the Deputy, and if deemed good and feasible, passed on to the Minister.<sup>55</sup> The Deputy Minister served, ex-officio, as a member of the Board of Governors of the University of Alberta. He initiated ideas, either for consideration by the Minister or for study and examination by his appropriate staff. This was one of Swift's great strengths according to R.H. McKinnon:

He had the Department set up very well with the various directors - curriculum, communications, school administration, Chief Superintendent of Schools, and he had his inspectors out there in every Division. That's what I liked - if there was trouble, all I'd have to do was call Dr. Swift and say 'I have a little trouble out in Pincher Creek'[sic]. He'd say 'I'll call the Superintendent down there and find out'. He'd be back with a memo indicating what the problem was and whether or not it was a serious concern. We

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<sup>55</sup>A circular produced by the Canadian Education Association entitled: "The Structure of Public Education in Canada", Dated May 2, 1947, offered the following job descriptions:

Minister of Education : "is an elected member of the Provincial Legislature who has been appointed as a cabinet minister with education as his portfolio. He, with the other cabinet ministers, determine the broad educational policy of the government in power. He is responsible to the legislative assembly and hence, to the people, for the satisfactory operation of the education system. He is not, as a rule, an expert in education in the professional sense. His position as Minister of Education terminates if the government is defeated or if he himself is not re-elected to the legislature when an election occurs."

Deputy Minister of Education: "is the top ranking civil servant in a typical Department of Education. He carries out the policy enunciated by the Minister. As an expert in education, he also advises the Minister on policy and determines, in large measure, the continuing policy of the Department since he retains his position when the governments change."

had excellent communication with the various areas. As he described them, these were "extensions of the Minister". The Minister is the Department of Education and the Deputy is the guy who runs it!<sup>56</sup>

However, Giles, in her study of Samuel John Willis, Deputy Minister of Education for British Columbia from 1919-1945, went much further than this. She pointed out that in an obvious sense, the Deputy Minister was the creator of convention, not just the embodiment of it. Since the Deputy Minister held the highest ranking civil service office in education, he could directly influence policies and programmes.<sup>57</sup> Rousseau's study of Western Canadian Deputy Ministers during the late 1960s found that the Deputy was responsible for the internal administration and supervision of the Department, exercising powers putatively designated to the Minister.<sup>58</sup>

On the federal level, Jack Granatstein offered the thesis that civil service leaders were able to create mechanisms that allowed their ministers to "shape, direct and control the course of events in Canada".<sup>59</sup> His study concluded that concomitantly, the Deputies "created a central government

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<sup>56</sup>Personal interview with R.H. McKinnon, January 26, 1998.

<sup>57</sup>Giles, 19.

<sup>58</sup>Joseph G. Rousseau, "Some Aspects of the Role of Selected Deputy Ministers of Education", (M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1968). 18-19.

<sup>59</sup>J.L. Granatstein, The Ottawa Men: The Civil Service Mandarins, 1935-1957, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1982), xii.

structure and system in which great power and influence flowed to them."<sup>60</sup>

As discussed earlier, in Alberta, the Deputy Minister's position was, at least during the period discussed, an apolitical one.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, the issue of loyalty to one's Minister was crucial. According to educational historian and one-time Deputy Minister, Robert Carney, the role of a successful Deputy would be:

To serve his Minister, an elected person. To do one's best, to serve his needs, help the Minister do the best job he can, and to identify certain things that may be lacking in certain respects, to help him in that regard . . . . One fundamental thing had to do with the idea that the Minister's public persona had to be a healthy one. That he would not suffer public embarrassment. So you had to protect the Minister, that sounds paternalistic, but it was your job.<sup>62</sup>

Surprisingly, throughout his tenure, Swift had little communication with his peers in similar positions in other Provinces, except through the Canadian Education Association. They met only once a year and "most of the consultation, if you can call it that, were informal conversations; there was not a great deal of interaction".<sup>63</sup>

Swift's long tenure in the position allowed him to

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., xii.

<sup>61</sup>W.H. Swift, unpublished memoirs, n.d.

<sup>62</sup>Personal interview with Robert Carney, May 17, 1996. Doctor Carney was Deputy Minister of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife between 1974 and 1976 during the Lougheed administration.

<sup>63</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, May 14, 1994.

comment on how the role of Deputy Minister changed between 1946 and 1966. By the time Swift became Deputy Minister, the size of the administration had increased. "Everything became more complex, the population of the Province was growing and so on".<sup>64</sup> He noted that position had changed on a number of levels. First of all, Swift maintained, "early on, McNally and I seemed to be more public figures than today".<sup>65</sup> Also, according to Swift:

there came to be more and more things in which we had to be interested. We developed a second Institute of Technology at Edmonton, in addition to the one in Calgary. We developed the Schools for the Deaf. Prior to that time, deaf children had to be sent away to schools in other provinces.<sup>66</sup>

According to R.H. McKinnon, the complications came with the post-war "baby-boom":

Well you can go back to 1946 through 1955. This was the baby boom. There was not much difference in the population of school from 1920 to 1950. It didn't change a great deal, oddly enough. When I first went onto staff in 1955 in Edmonton there were only 635 teachers. Dr. Sheppard was the Superintendent and Bill Wagner was his Assistant and Tom Vicker was the other one, that was all there was in Head Office. However, right about then, those kids were starting to come through. By 1954 there was a huge increase in the primary population. Well by the time I got to be Minister of Education, those Grade Ones in 1954, were Grade Tens in 1964. That meant we were short of teachers, short of space, short of total schools. After 1947, when the oil money started to come in, the Government had a little more to do some things like that as well. So that better schools and so

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, May 19, 1996.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

on were starting to be built. The other thing that was happening at that time was the switch from rural to urban populations. The cities began to grow immensely. This affected schooling . . . . So from the time Swift became Deputy to about 1953, that was a big change, and from 1953 to 1963, that was huge because that's when the big populations started to come in [sic].<sup>67</sup>

In one of Swift's last interviews, it was pointed out by the writer that, according to the correspondence of the time, T.C. Byrne, then Chief Superintendent of Schools, seemed to be taking on more and more of the responsibilities previously undertaken by the Deputy Minister<sup>68</sup>. Swift replied that:

Lougheed<sup>69</sup> provided every Minister with a senior executive secretary/assistant, or some such. From that point on, the Minister's chief advisor was this executive secretary, not the Deputy Minister, whose influence was diminished. During my time the Deputy Minister was becoming busier and busier. For example, by the 1960s there were two technical colleges, also the Students' Finance Board. As a result, a lot of the load had to be shifted to the Chief Superintendent of Schools.<sup>70</sup>

Throughout his tenure, Swift was a member of the Board of Governors of the University of Alberta. Swift noted that he first went on to the Board of Governors according to the old Act, under which the Vice-President and the President of

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<sup>67</sup>Personal interview with R.H. McKinnon, January 26, 1998.

<sup>68</sup>Ample evidence for this exists, for example reports published in the Annual Reports from 1960-1964, and correspondence found in Provincial Archives of Alberta Acc. No. 79.334, among other sources. T.C. Byrne eventually served as Deputy Minister of Education from 1966-1971.

<sup>69</sup>Swift was referring here to Premier Peter Lougheed, whose Conservatives defeated the Social Credit government in 1971.

<sup>70</sup>Personal interview, W.H. Swift, May 27, 1996.

the Alumni Association were members of the Board of Governors. Swift became Vice-President of the Alumni Association while he was still Chief Inspector of Schools so he became a member before the Governors amended the Senate. According to Swift, "that would . . . have been 1945".<sup>71</sup> Swift was on the Board of Governors, then, for twenty-one years, "twenty by statute because the University Act, at that time, provided that the Deputy Minister of Education and the Deputy Minister of the Treasury became ex officio members of the Board of Governors".<sup>72</sup>

So I was a much more prominent member than before, for most of the time, than the Deputy Minister of the Treasury. In fact, we had one Deputy Minister of Treasury that never came to the meetings except for the budget meeting. That was the only time that he came, being intent on cutting the budget down!<sup>73</sup>

Asked if the two positions came into conflict, Swift replied:

No. There was a popular notion among some people at the university, I've no idea how many, that the University Act had been written, and this was long before my time, to provide for the Deputy Minister of Education and the Deputy Minister of Treasury to be on the Board to act as "spies" for the Government. That is utter nonsense! I did not, before going to a Board meeting, go to the Minister of Education with the agenda and say 'how shall I vote on this?'. . . . I was not on the Board representing the Government in any political sense. As a matter of fact, there was no provision in the law for the Deputy Minister

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<sup>71</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, May 14, 1994.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.



to be Vice-Chairman, but for most of the period that I was on the Board, if the Chairman had to be away for some reason, I was the Vice-Chairman.<sup>74</sup>

As much as possible, Bill Swift attempted to separate his professional from his personal life. He remembered, for example, that he discouraged telephone calls to his home. He did the best he could to avoid having his professional responsibilities interfere with his home life.<sup>75</sup> Swift's eldest son, Glenn, himself a career academic, remembered that this fundamental principle of not bringing work home always amazed him "because as a university professor and teacher I was always working at home".<sup>76</sup> This "made a difference to the family", he concluded.<sup>77</sup>

It would seem, though, that this gradual increase in responsibility must have required, at times, long working days. Asked how he dealt with this, Swift replied:

My answer might be surprising. When I was Inspector of Schools at Athabasca, I worked long days, I had to visit schools, and there were a great many other problems in an area like that - long distances to travel, reports to make, no stenographic assistance. I found myself working a great deal in my home as I had no office provided for me. I found myself working far too much, not necessarily for my own good. I said, when I was appointed to the Normal School staff at Camrose, 'from now on, I am not going to do any work at home unless it is of great necessity'. Consequently, while the others of the Camrose

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Personal interview with Glen Swift, January 22, 1998.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

Normal School staff were carrying their briefcases back and forth, I carried no briefcase. This was pretty well true even during the whole time that I was Deputy Minister. Now, I had a great many meetings to attend; addressing Home and School Associations, going out to some meeting where there was a row over some school division, or something like that, but I did my work in my office, and I did it, I think, quickly.<sup>78</sup>

Swift, apparently, had garnered a reputation for making decisions quickly. He recalled that:

When Jim Fowler retired as Head of the Institute of Technology in Calgary, I was there for the banquet. He said: 'If I wrote a letter to the Deputy Minister, I could expect to have an answer back in two days. Now the answer may be that this will require some more study before we can properly deal with it but I would at least get an answer'. I remember Ernie Hodgson telling me about the time that he was appointed Director of School Administration, the first time he came into my office for business purposes, he had his list of things to discuss with me. He said 'in fifteen or twenty minutes, he was out! I expected to be there for an hour'. So whether I had the reputation for making good decisions, well, who's to say . . . , but, on the whole I made quick decisions. I didn't get into too much trouble (Laughs).<sup>79</sup>

Two influential organizations to which Swift, as part of his duties as Deputy Minister, devoted a great deal of his attention, were the Education Society of Edmonton (hereafter referred to as the E.S.E) and the Canadian Education Association (C.E.A.). With regard to the former, according to Patterson, in 1927 H.C. Newland was involved in the creation of two private educational organizations known as the Education Society of Edmonton and the Calgary Progress Club.

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<sup>78</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, July 17, 1994.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

These two small, exclusive groups met bi-weekly "to discuss contemporary educational problems and relevant research and literature".<sup>80</sup> Patterson went on to write that:

Although their influence was never conspicuous to the public, these clubs did wield a great deal of power in educational circles. Their carefully selected members were excellent scholars, professional men and women concerned with education. Many of the members came to fill influential positions in the Department of Education, the university, the normal schools and the city school systems.<sup>81</sup>

According to von Heyking in her study of the development of the social studies curriculum in the province, "the Education Society of Edmonton and her sister organization in Calgary were . . . instrumental in the introduction of progressive education reforms in Alberta."<sup>82</sup>

Several of the educators in these two clubs were "singled out for rapid professional advancement".<sup>83</sup> Newland was one who reached the top levels of decision-making in the Department of Education, Swift was another, M.E. LaZerte was a past President.<sup>84</sup> A form letter regarding the raison d'etre of the Society pointed out that: "Its sixty members are drawn from the University of Alberta, Department of Education, and

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<sup>80</sup>Robert S. Patterson, John W. Chalmers, John W. Friesen, eds., Profiles of Canadian Educators, (D.C. Heath, 1974), 290.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>von Heyking, 191.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

the school systems in and adjacent to Edmonton."<sup>85</sup> According to the regulations on new members in the same document: "Nominees should show evidence of a personal interest in educational problems and an ability to contribute to the discussions."<sup>86</sup>

An E.S.E. "Programme of Activities", dated October 6, 1958, displayed a list of upcoming speakers. For example, Swift was listed as speaking on his book, Trends in Canadian Education<sup>87</sup> Likewise, Swift was to speak on "United Nations - Twenty Years of Progress", on November 9, 1964.<sup>88</sup> According to the latter newsletter, other prominent members of the organization at that time included: T.C. Byrne, W.H. Worth, H.T. Coutts, T.D. Baker, H.T. Sparby, M.E. Lazerte, and W.P. Wagner.<sup>89</sup>

According to the syllabus of the "1960 Short Course on Educational Leadership, The Role of The Superintendent", in

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<sup>85</sup>Education Society of Edmonton, Form Letter dated, Nov. 25, 1963. Department of Education, P.A.A., Acc. No. 76.473, Box 1.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Education Society of Edmonton, "Programme of Activities, 1958-59", Department of Education, P.A.A., Acc. No. 76.473, Box 1.  
W.H. Swift, Trends in Canadian Education, (Saskatoon: Quance Lectureship Committee, 1958).

<sup>88</sup>Education Society of Edmonton, "Programme of Activities, September 1, 1964", Department of Education, P.A.A., Acc. No. 76.473, Box 1.

<sup>89</sup>Education Society of Edmonton, "Programme of Activities, September 1, 1964", Department of Education, P.A.A., Acc. No. 76.473, Box 1.

which Swift participated:

The C.E.A. . . . is an interprovincial association supported by the ten departments of education, as well as by a number of city school systems and individual members. In 1952 it received a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation toward the support of a 5 year project in Educational Leadership. [These short courses continued after the grant was up.]<sup>90</sup>

The C.E.A. seemed to consume a great deal of Swift's time. Much of its general correspondence was addressed to the Deputy Ministers. The C.E.A. was involved in projects such as UNESCO, the National Committee for School Health Research, and the Canadian Council for Reconstruction (through the auspices of UNESCO to aid war-torn countries). Many of Swift's national and international contacts would have been made through this organization.

One most enlightening item came from a letter written by M.E. LaZerte, then President of the C.E.A., to Swift, in October of 1950. In regard to a C.E.A. Research Council meeting, LaZerte wrote: "Can you suggest one or two problems of more than provincial interest that might be studied by the Research Council?"<sup>91</sup> On the letter itself appear notes made by Swift that reflected his thinking at the time. For example he listed: "relations between educators and municipal local

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<sup>90</sup>Canadian Educational Association, "1960 Short Course on Educational Leadership: The Role of the Superintendent". P.A.A. Acc. No. 79.334, Box 12, File 103.

<sup>91</sup>M.E.Lazerte to Swift, October 19, 1950. P.A.A. Acc. No. 79.334, Box 11, File 94.

government bodies and authorities - Comparisons/trends". Next, he wrote "school lunch, milk, school breakfast. For example U.K., Norway." Further examples were "religious education and delinquency", followed by "retardation and curricular deficiencies vis a vis delinquency". Finally, he wrote, "uniformity of attendance and other statistics"<sup>92</sup>

Valuable, for comparative purposes, is Walter H. Worth's exhaustive study, "Analysis of the Editorial Treatment of Education in the Alberta Press".<sup>93</sup> The study determined the nature and volume of editorial comment on education in Alberta and featured an analysis of "every editorial on education appearing in the six daily newspapers of the province during a five year period from January 1, 1946 to December 31, 1950."<sup>94</sup> Worth found that editorials on education tended to be most concerned with the "financial expenditures for education, problems involved in higher education, and the efficiency of the curriculum."<sup>95</sup> On the whole, Worth found comment to be favourable. He observed that it was only when the curriculum and educational finance were examined by the editors that criticism mounted.<sup>96</sup> Worth pointed out that,

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<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

<sup>93</sup>Walter H. Worth, "An Analysis of the Treatment of Education in the Alberta Press", Unpublished M.Ed. Thesis, University of Alberta, 1952.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid. v.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid. v.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid. v.

while there was often an intelligent analysis of educational problems, "the virtual neglect of any questions of considerable importance to educators and the ill-informed appraisal of certain educational procedures [indicated] . . . a lack of contact with what [went] . . . on in the schools."<sup>97</sup> Of note here is that nowhere, other than Worth's brief mention of curriculum and finance, did there seem to be any concern with the issue of the "progressive" nature of the curriculum which was to create such a furore only three years later. Certainly worthy of future study would be the extent to which these grassroots criticisms meshed with the concerns of organizations like the Edmonton and Calgary Education Societies and the Canadian Education Association.

Now that Swift's position within the Province's educational hierarchy, between 1946 and 1966 has been established, and the theoretical nature of the position has been examined, it is important to observe how Swift functioned as Deputy Minister. In order to illuminate and evaluate his performance in this area, the following chapter will analyze several key issues in which he had a direct role.

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid. v.

CHAPTER VI  
FROM THE TOP DOWN: SWIFT'S LEGACY

Firmly entrenched at the top of the educational hierarchy of the Province, his bureaucratic and educational credentials fully established, W.H. Swift was now able to directly influence schooling in Alberta, from the top down. This chapter seeks not only to illustrate how Swift actually functioned in his role as Deputy Minister in times of crisis and high public visibility, but also to show how he reacted when confronted with moral decisions. Several major issues will be examined in detail in this regard as a way of illustrating not only the role of the Deputy Minister but also Swift's unique approach to the job. One of these, the furor over the Jenner-Atlee school amalgamation between 1955 and 1965, will be offered as an in-depth case study. The Atlee case serves as an example of the controversy which had developed in many areas as small rural schools were closed as a result of the divisional amalgamations begun by the Social Credit Government before the War. Although the Atlee-Jenner case was one of the last examples of this kind, it was certainly one of the most bitterly contested. The chapter will conclude with an overall evaluation of Swift's accomplishments as Deputy Minister and an examination of his post-retirement career.

Probably the best documentary source, in terms of understanding the career of W.H. Swift in historical context, are the Annual Reports of the Department of Education. In



each of the Annual Reports it was the task of the Deputy Minister to report on the state of the Department, and education in general, to the Minister. The reports of the different Department heads would then make up the bulk of the report.

In his initial Annual Report under Ansley, under the rubric, "Staff Changes", Swift wrote, "foremost among these changes must be placed the retirement of Dr. G. Fred McNally, Deputy Minister from 1935 - March 31, 1946."<sup>1</sup>

Swift concluded by writing "Dr. McNally was succeeded as Deputy Minister on April 1, 1946 by the writer."<sup>2</sup> Under the title, "Graduate Studies", Swift wrote:

It is of interest to note that a large number of our employees, especially Superintendents of Schools, as well as teachers, continue to pursue graduate studies in Eastern Canada and the United States. The broadened experience and outlook resulting from their studies and travel are sure to redound favourably to their practice of education in this province.<sup>3</sup>

Under "School Administration/ Teacher Shortage", Swift glumly pointed out that:

The year 1946 must be recorded as being a most difficult and trying one from the standpoint of school administration. The continued and increased shortage of teachers has not only deprived thousands of children of proper

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<sup>1</sup>Annual Report of the Department of Education, Province of Alberta, 1946. P.A.A. Acc. No. 68.232. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Annual Report of the Department of Education, Province of Alberta, 1946. P.A.A. Acc. No. 68.232. 7.

<sup>3</sup>Annual Report of the Department of Education, Province of Alberta, 1946. P.A.A. Acc. No. 68.232. 8.

educational opportunity but has imposed upon school authorities . . . a great burden of effort, worry and public discontent. While only fifty-two schools were without some sort of service at the end of the year, the superintendents reported that about 1,500 rooms were either without service or were being supplied in some makeshift or inferior manner.<sup>4</sup>

By the 1950 Annual Report under Ivan Casey, the County Act had passed and teacher certification was changed. Of the County Act, Swift wrote:

The passing of the County Act . . . in 1950 constituted a development of considerable magnitude. This legislation provides for the setting up of local government units anticipated to be about the size of existing School Divisions, under which will fall municipal, school and hospital administration, a single council with subsidiary committees having jurisdiction in all three areas.<sup>5</sup>

In a later publication pertaining to the issue, Swift wrote that, up until that time, Alberta, like the other western provinces, had no counties. Local government was carried on by two chief types of body: the municipality, city, town, village, or rural; and the school board - district or division. Constituted under their respective statutes, each had powers and responsibilities, and some degree of autonomy. Swift qualified this by stating, however, that in some respects, this was subject to oversight by provincial

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<sup>4</sup>Annual Report of the Department of Education, Province of Alberta, 1946. P.A.A. Acc. No. 68.232. 8.

<sup>5</sup>Annual Report of the Department of Education, Province of Alberta, 1950. P.A.A. Acc. No. 68.139. 7.

departments.<sup>6</sup>

By 1950, rural Alberta had been almost completely reorganized, on the school side, into large units or areas of administration called school divisions, and, on the municipal side, into areas of comparable size called municipal districts. With regard to boundaries, however, there was little correspondence, with school divisions and municipal districts often overlapping. Further, by agreement, most town and village school districts had joined their adjacent or surrounding school divisions, though municipally, the towns and villages themselves, remained apart. For a host of reasons, much dissatisfaction was expressed. These included: high school board expenditures compared to municipal costs; the need for pupil transportation and consequent road maintenance costs due to increased school centralization; and problems regarding disparate school tax rates within the same municipality due to boundary overlap.<sup>7</sup>

There had, in fact, been considerable opposition to this Act, particularly from the Alberta Teachers' Association, and, to some extent, the Alberta School Trustees' Association.<sup>8</sup> The print media in the province were mixed in their reaction. According to the Edmonton Journal:

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 43.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 43-44.

<sup>8</sup>W.H. Swift, "Counties - Amalgamated Administration", Canadian Education, Vol. 10, No. 1, (Dec., 1954), 43.

The separation of education is an important essential in the decentralization which is one of the great strengths of our present system of municipal government<sup>9</sup>

The newspaper was concerned that:

. . . provincial ministers and officials, impressed by their heavier dollar contribution to the cause, may come to feel that this should be accompanied by more centralized control and more detailed provincial direction of education, to the subsequent detriment of the diversity which gives unity its vitality.<sup>10</sup>

The Calgary Albertan agreed with the Edmonton paper. In March of 1950, Calgary Mayor Don MacKay stated that he recognized a "growing feeling to abolish school boards in favour of a director of education responsible to the municipal council."<sup>11</sup> Reacting to this statement, the Albertan pointed out that:

Separation of school administration from municipal administration has long been taken for granted in Alberta. If Mayor Don MacKay sees a 'growing feeling' to abolish school boards, we are prepared to encourage a growing feeling that they not be abolished.<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, The Lethbridge Herald was of the opinion that the scheme be tried. It argued that:

A county system under good management, with county manager, county engineer, county school superintendent and county assessor working in unison would solve a lot of problems and could save a lot of money to the people who, through taxes on

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<sup>9</sup>The Edmonton Journal, December 10, 1950.

<sup>10</sup>The Edmonton Journal, April, 3, 1950.

<sup>11</sup>The Calgary Albertan, March 6, 1950.

<sup>12</sup>The Calgary Albertan, March 6, 1950.

property, must carry practically the whole burden.<sup>13</sup>

Swift was silent throughout this media debate, obviously working behind the scenes on legislation that was to be air tight. In spite of the mixed reaction, the County Act was passed. It authorized the government, upon request, to establish a county, including the determination of its boundaries. A council was first of all elected by subdivisions or wards. It possessed all the powers of a municipal council and of a school divisional board. By law it had to establish a school committee and a municipal committee.

The school committee was empowered by law to act for the council as though it were a school divisional board, but it could not, on its own, borrow money or pass a bylaw. In the main, the school committees in the counties, operated with considerable autonomy. The Superintendent of Schools, normally attached to a school division by the Department of Education, was attached to the county, under this scenario, and in particular to the school committee.<sup>14</sup>

According to Swift, although there was "no evidence of significant changes in service or expense, . . . . uniformity of taxation over the county area [had] . . . been achieved, . . . [and] internal disharmony respecting roads and tax

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<sup>13</sup>The Lethbridge Herald, December, 2, 1949.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 44-45.

rates [was] . . . eliminated."<sup>15</sup>

The 1950 Annual Report also mentioned developments pertaining to teacher certification. These included the following: rewriting of the School Act; study of teacher certification; minimum requirements raised to two years for a certificate. Although temporary licenses were still issued, (because of teacher shortages) "their status was lowered in relation to other certificates."<sup>16</sup>

According to the Annual Report of 1951, under the heading, "Centralization", Swift noted that:

Stimulated by teacher shortage, improved roads and the demands of the communities for this type of service, one room schools continued to be closed and their children taken to central schools. Despite occasional criticisms, the evidence appears strong that this sort of school service is in high regard. Divisional Boards are, in the main, under pressure to extend it. The Department does not actively promote centralization, regarding it as a local question.<sup>17</sup>

This statement clearly spelled out the Department's stand on the issue and would be Swift's guiding principle in the later Atlee-Jenner dispute.

1955 was the "Jubilee Year" and the Annual Report reflected this. According to Swift: "The schools of Alberta along with the citizens generally, celebrated the Fiftieth

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 45.

<sup>16</sup>Annual Report of the Department of Education, Province of Alberta, 1950. P.A.A. Acc. No. 68.139, 8.

<sup>17</sup>Annual Report of the Department of Education, Province of Alberta, 1951. P.A.A. Acc. No. 68.139. 8.

Anniversary of the establishment of the Province."<sup>18</sup>

Under the heading "Beyond our Borders", Swift wrote:

In July, 1954, the undersigned was privileged to attend the Seventeenth Annual Conference on Public Education in Geneva, Switzerland. He was sent officially by the Canadian Education Association, unofficially representing Canada which sends no official delegate. He was chosen to serve as Vice-Chairman of the Conference.<sup>19</sup>

In 1956, it was announced that the Alberta School for the Deaf had opened in November of 1955. Under the heading "High School Inspectors", Swift pointed out that:

There continues to be a change in the sort of service rendered by the High School Inspectors. While their traditional duties are still carried out, there is increasing demand for their services in two respects:

a) To assist local departments and groups of teachers in respect of special supervisory and study projects . . . b) To conduct or participate in surveys designed to assist school boards in deciding upon major organizational problems affecting school service over a whole division or within a whole school system."<sup>20</sup>

According to Swift, prior to this time, deaf children were sent, by arrangements with the provinces concerned, to schools outside the province. They would be assembled in Edmonton and accompanied by mentors from the Department take the train to their destinations. This meant that they would be away from their parents for a full year. "A Principal was

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<sup>18</sup>Annual Report of the Department of Education, Province of Alberta, 1955. P.A.A. Acc. No. 68.139. 8.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Annual Report of the Department of Education, Province of Alberta, 1956. P.A.A. Acc. No. 68.139. 8-9.

appointed who visited a number of schools in Canada and the U.S.A. who then participated in the planning of the building and got the School into operation."<sup>21</sup>

Swift pointed out that "after 1966 there developed, internationally, a strong movement for the desegregation of handicapped children and the placing them in regular classrooms."<sup>22</sup> The inclusion debate was, and of course, still is, very controversial.

The 1957 Annual Report let it be known that an agreement was signed which brought Lethbridge College into existence with instruction to begin in September of 1957. This was followed by the grim reality that "teacher shortages remained a continued problem."<sup>23</sup>

In the 1960 Annual Report, under the heading "Cameron Commission", Swift wrote: "Presented to the Government in November of 1959, it contained 280 recommendations bearing on a variety of aspects of education."<sup>24</sup> Commenting once again on the chronic shortage of teachers, Swift, in a statement probably reflective of the "baby boom" phenomenon, wrote:

While the teacher shortage cannot yet be said to have been overcome . . . it may be noted that enrolments in the Faculty of Education

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<sup>21</sup>W.H. Swift, unpublished memoirs, n.d.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Annual Report of the Department of Education, Province of Alberta, 1957. P.A.A. Acc. No. 68.139. 7-8.

<sup>24</sup>Annual Report of the Department of Education, Province of Alberta, 1960. P.A.A. Acc. No. 68.139. 7.



were in 1959-60, at an unprecedented high . . . The major shortage now . . . is at the high school level.<sup>25</sup>

Under the title "National Advisory Council on School Broadcasting", in the same Annual Report, Swift pointed out that:

Your Deputy Minister was appointed to the Chairmanship of the N.A.C.S.B. . . . The Council advises the C.B.C. with respect to school broadcasts . . . achieving a liaison between the provinces, which have legal jurisdiction over education, and the C.B.C. as a service agency. The Council is finding that it must increasingly give attention to television as an educational medium.<sup>26</sup>

The use of various electronic media, be it radio or television, to enhance education, was of keen interest to Swift throughout his career. All throughout 1963, Richard Morton, Superintendent of School Broadcasts, kept Swift appraised of the debate and progress towards instituting the use of educational television programmes throughout the Province. This was largely initiated through the efforts of the Edmonton Public and Separate Boards and the Jasper Place Public School Board in conjunction with the Faculty of Education, University of Alberta.<sup>27</sup>

According to the 1962 Annual Report, The Northland School

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<sup>25</sup>Annual Report of the Department of Education, Province of Alberta, 1960. P.A.A. Acc. No. 68.139. 8.

<sup>26</sup>Annual Report of the Department of Education, Province of Alberta, 1960. P.A.A. Acc. No. 68.139. 8.

<sup>27</sup>Correspondence, R.A. Morton to Swift, March 13, 1963. P.A.A. Acc. No. 89.301, Box 1.

Division was established January 1, 1961, "to serve the needs of the many Metis and other isolated communities over large parts of Northern Alberta."<sup>28</sup> The majority of these schools in these areas enroled native children, though there were some serving isolated white populations. According to Swift, the problems facing the schools were many due to their isolation.<sup>29</sup> The Native schools were the responsibility of the federal government, but "they were not easily administered."<sup>30</sup> The federal government eventually agreed to the formation of the Northland Division, according to Swift, "bearing the proportionate share of the cost of operation based on school populations."<sup>31</sup> Swift noted that:

the Division was for some years under the charge of an official Trustee. In due course a School Board was put in place, with all members being appointed by the Government of Alberta. With the exception of the Chairman, these were Native people from various parts of the Division. The establishment of the school division brought a degree of order out of chaos but there were inevitable problems and difficulties, with consequent complaints and allegations.<sup>32</sup>

Not long after the Lougheed Government came into power, it was decided to have a thorough investigation into how well the division was operating, and as to what changes might be

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<sup>28</sup>Annual Report of the Department of Education, Province of Alberta, 1962. P.A.A. Acc. No. 68.139. 8.

<sup>29</sup>W.H. Swift, unpublished memoirs.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

effected, if feasible, to improve both administration and education. Consequently, there was appointed a Study Group, "a sort of sub-Royal Commission, consisting of three persons,"<sup>33</sup> Swift being the Chairman. He recalled that the Group:

visited all the schools, holding public meetings for local input, staff and community. We travelled with our sleeping bags, suitcases and briefcases. I drafted our report, discussed it with the committee members, and submitted it to the Minister. It was well received and in some degree acted upon. It was a most interesting experience.<sup>34</sup>

In 1962, under the heading "Vocational Education," Swift pointed out that there was great impetus given to vocational education by the Technical and Vocational Training Agreement, signed early in 1961 between the Federal Government and the Provincial Governments. This resulted, wrote Swift, "in great activity in the construction of new facilities, in the development of new and revised courses, and in the study of problems of articulation between the developing locally operated schools, the Institutes of Technology and the Apprenticeship Programme."<sup>35</sup> The Alberta press were firmly behind the idea of the expansion of vocational facilities. The Lethbridge Herald typified the prevailing attitude:

It is all very well to urge a higher and more

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Annual Report of the Department of Education, Province of Alberta, 1962. P.A.A. Acc. No. 68.139. 8.

liberal educational standard. But don't overlook the fact that vocational training whether it be in the school, in the industry or in the business, must produce the goods and the profits out of which the costs of a liberal education may be paid. Education does not pay for itself while it is being acquired.<sup>36</sup>

According to Swift, Alberta had from relatively early years, in Calgary, the Institute of Technology and Art. This institution was much in need of modern expansion, and the population of the province was growing and required more technicians. As a result of a federal government funding program along with provincial money, a second Institute was also established, the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) was established as a companion to the already existing Southern Institute. After 1966 the Art portion of SAIT was established as an independent institution as the Alberta College of Art. According to Swift, this program also extended to the public high schools. A considerable number in cities and later towns received federal and provincial money to establish vocational facilities or improve what they had. These were usually incorporated into composite high schools.<sup>37</sup> The Institutes reported directly to Swift, as Deputy Minister. Swift pointed out that: "some time after 1966 they were given autonomy under boards of governors and relate to the government, as do the universities through the Department of

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<sup>36</sup>The Lethbridge Herald, March 24, 1950.

<sup>37</sup>W.H. Swift, unpublished memoirs, n.d.

Advanced Education."<sup>38</sup>

According to R.H. McKinnon, Minister of Education from 1964-1967:

the Federal Government got into the picture with [Prime Minister John] Diefenbaker's T.V.T.A. [Technical Vocational Training Agreement, 1962-1967]. There were ten programs involved. Of course the Federal Government has no jurisdiction in education. However, they have a Department of Labour, and labour needed a lot of help, so T.V.T.A. provided the way that the Feds could give a little money to the Provinces. Swift was right along with me in our desire to use this money to the fullest extent. Fortunately I had a Minister of Finance who had just been Minister of Education, Andy [A.O.] Aalborg. He realized the situation, as did Fred Colborne, Deputy Minister of Public Works. So I was very lucky. I had Dr. Swift, who was willing to get into this business [of] . . . technical and vocational training, Aalborg who had the purse strings, and Public Works, who had been highly involved in the universities and Junior Colleges.<sup>39</sup>

McKinnon went on to point out that, under the agreement, any school that could be built with a vocational training unit, was eligible for funding, providing it had one thousand students. NAIT (Northern Alberta Institute of Technology) and SAIT (Southern Alberta Institute of Technonlogy) were immediately eligible, that being their main job. "The Federal Government were paying seventy-five percent of building costs at that time."<sup>40</sup> The province was to pay fifteen percent and local boards ten. "This was was for vocational high schools,"

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Personal interview with R.H. McKinnon, January 26, 1998.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid,

NAIT and SAIT were already completely provincially funded.<sup>41</sup> Alberta, therefore received seventy-five percent funding for expansions at NAIT and SAIT.<sup>42</sup> The province then decided to pick up the local share.

A local district out there that could get one thousand high school students could qualify. We had Jack Mitchell brought in, as Director of Technical Vocational Training, to look after the T.V.T.A. Alberta got nearly 72 million dollars in aid through that program. The other provinces didn't go after it nearly as aggressively as we did.<sup>43</sup>

McKinnon pointed out that it was Swift's organizational skills and flexibility that allowed Mitchell to do his job. In 1966, one program was particularly noteworthy which allowed for the fast-track training of welders in Fort McMurray. These were desperately required to work on the Tar Sands Oil Recovery Project.<sup>44</sup>

The above provides evidence of an abrupt shift in the perception of the role of education. Now it was seen as preparation for a future post-industrial society. The need for a more highly trained workforce, a boom in the economy, the movement of the "baby boomers" through the educational system, all provided an impetus for what Young referred to as

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

a "mania for education" throughout this period.<sup>45</sup> In Alberta, this manifested itself in the expansion of existing facilities and the new construction Swift referred to in the foregoing Annual Report. By 1964, Swift was referring to the new independence of the University of Calgary and the establishment of the University of Lethbridge.<sup>46</sup>

Swift had, by this time, been Deputy Minister for nearly twenty years. He had perfected the art of being able to detach himself from the confusion of the moment and to pinpoint, with a clarity derived from, as Henry Taylor so aptly put it, "executive experience,"<sup>47</sup> the essence of a given problem.

In looking back over his tenure as Deputy Minister, Swift was inclined to point to the elimination, over a relatively short number of years, of the one-room school and their replacement by centralized schools, as being one of the most significant occurrences during his regime. This included, of course, the wholesale busing of farm pupils. Swift recalled that:

The formation of school divisions, the aggregation of 50 or more one room schools had been almost entirely completed during the regime of G.F. McNally. While there was then an over-all Board and administration, they continued to operate the

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<sup>45</sup>See John Young, "Equality of Educational Opportunity", in E.B. Titley ed. Canadian Education: Historical Themes and Contemporary Issues, (Calgary: Detselig, 1990), 165-171.

<sup>46</sup>Annual Report of the Department of Education, Province of Alberta, 1964. P.A.A. Acc. No. 68.139. 9.

<sup>47</sup>Henry Taylor, The Statesman, (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, 1836), xvii.

existing one room schools. There were probably over 3000 such schools when I became Deputy Minister.<sup>48</sup>

By the time Swift left office there were practically no one-room schools left in Alberta, "despite the frequent opposition of local boards and communities who felt that their local identity and authority were being undermined."<sup>49</sup> The Department Of Education was favourable to these developments but did not attempt to impose them.<sup>50</sup> One such controversial attempt at forced centralization was the Atlee-Jenner case.

#### The Atlee - Jenner School Dispute

In September of 1958, a Calgary Herald headline read: "The Battle of Atlee Continues and the Children Stay at Home."<sup>51</sup> Invoking every southern Albertan ranching icon from broncos and lassos to heartbroken young buckaroos, the rather maudlin piece went on to relate that:

Seven-year-old Danny Garrlock is a big boy. He derives the most delight when his cowboy dad allows him to saddle a horse and accompany him on range forays in his job as community lease rider for the Alberta government. But Danny cried September 4. His tears fell unashamedly in his mother's lap that afternoon as he related the message given him by school teacher Mrs. Irene Walsh. School was finished at Atlee. Acting on instructions from Medicine Hat School

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<sup>48</sup>W.H. Swift, unpublished memoirs, n.d.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>See Appendix "B" of W.H. Swift, Memoirs of a Frontier School Inspector in Alberta, for a discussion regarding the inevitability of the demise of the one-room school in Alberta.

<sup>51</sup>The Calgary Herald, September 8, 1958.



Division No. 4, the one-room school at Atlee had to close at once. Danny was fashioning a lasso Wednesday while thousands of other Alberta children were learning the three R's. A car drew up to the small Garrlock ranch home and 'dad's helper' watched in silence as a well-dressed man handed Danny's father a blunt legal notice. In one way it solved the youngster's educational difficulties.<sup>52</sup> In another it made the situation more acute.

Parents of children who had been attending Atlee school, a tiny community sixty miles northwest of Medicine Hat, had withheld them from attending since receiving notice that they were to be bused to Jenner, nineteen miles away. Danny's father, the paper pointed out, was one of three Atlee residents served with a warning to have his children attend school at Jenner, or face prosecution under the School Act. They were given five days in which to act.<sup>53</sup>

The Herald went on to point out that Atlee school chairman, George Howe summed up the feelings of all three parents when he stated that:

I've lived in this district all my life. I know what winter can do to these roads and time after time I've had to resort to horseback to travel the three miles into Atlee. Sure the divisional board can sit in Medicine Hat and tell us what to do but making us do it is another thing. We know this district a lot better than they.<sup>54</sup>

All the parents, according to the paper, stated that they were willing to face a jail term rather than spending countless

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

winter days in anxiety over the safety of their little ones.<sup>55</sup>

Incredibly, the same issue had erupted the previous year when the Board of School Division No. 4 had advised Atlee parents of the Jenner plan. In similar fashion, the parents had balked at sending their children on what they considered a hazardous nineteen mile journey over a road considered to be dangerous. At that time, the board had relented and allowed the students to continue their studies at Atlee for the remainder of the term.<sup>56</sup>

On the other side, the resolute stand of the Atlee parents was described by Ted Roll, the board chairman of School Division No. 4, as being like "B.C. Doukhobors in many ways."<sup>57</sup> Roll stood by the board's decision and the notice delivered by its agent, attendance officer, Charles Vaughn, which read:

Take notice that unless within five days from the receipt by you of this notice you cause your child (or ward) to attend school, you will be liable to prosecution under the School Attendance Act. And further take notice that if within 12 months after the date of service of this notice upon you, you fail to cause the above mentioned child, or any other child of whom you have charge or control between the ages of 7 and 15 to attend school and continue regular attendance thereat, you will be

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>The Medicine Hat News, November 2, 1958.

<sup>57</sup>The Calgary Herald, September 8, 1958. This was an obvious reference to the Sons of Freedom Sect which had gained much notoriety throughout the 1950s through a series of demonstrations and bombings. All Dukhobours for many years thereafter were painted with the same brush. See Nick Kach for more on this issue.

liable to prosecution under the said Act without notice.<sup>58</sup>

To understand the source of this antipathy one must go back to the introduction by the Social Credit Government, in 1936, of legislation calling for the amalgamation of hundreds of smaller school districts into larger school divisions.<sup>59</sup> The principal features of the new divisions were, according to Jonason:

1. Each division at first consisted of rural divisions only.
2. Divisions were to be governed by boards of three to five trustees, depending on size, elected for three years on a revolving basis.
3. Divisional boards were responsible for:
  - a. Operation of all buildings.
  - b. Engagement of teachers and other employees, and adoption of salary schedules.
  - c. Preparation of budgets and requisitions.
  - d. Provision of medical, health and other services.
4. The superintendents of schools, to be appointed and paid for by the government, would act as advisors to the divisional boards of trustees.
5. School districts would elect their own local boards. However, they would have little power other than advisory to the divisional boards.<sup>60</sup>

Chalmers noted that, by 1941, a total of fifty divisions were in operation and by 1966 the total was fifty-nine.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Chalmers, Schools, 283. This was a plan which had been adapted from an idea originally put forward by the Social Credit government's predecessor, the United Farmers of Alberta, in particular, Education Minister Perren Baker, but never acted upon.

<sup>60</sup>J.C. Jonason, "The Large Units of School Administration in Alberta", (Unpublished Ed.D. dissertation, University of Oregon, 1951), as quoted in Chalmers, Schools, 285.

<sup>61</sup>Chalmers, Schools, 287.

According to its own brochure, After Three Years, the Alberta government was mightily pleased with the results of this endeavour. It trumpeted the "increased opportunities . . . being provided for high school pupils, the better conditions under which teachers [were able to] . . . carry out their duties as instructors, the improvement in the accommodation and equipment of schools, [and] . . . the more harmonious relations developed among people of each community."<sup>62</sup> These were all factors, the brochure claimed, "which . . . contributed to the growing favour with which the larger administrative unit [was] . . . being accepted by the people."<sup>63</sup> The publication went on to say that despite the fact that it had not lowered expenditures on education as a whole, it had "reduced the yearly cost per pupil according to both enrolment and average attendance and also the average cost per pupil for each day of attendance."<sup>64</sup> As well as increasing the opportunities of rural children, it went on, it had "succeeded in giving the people of the Province a larger return on their educational dollar."<sup>65</sup>

In Chalmers' assessment, for the most part, these claims

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<sup>62</sup>Alberta Government, After Three Years, (Edmonton: King's Printer, 1940), as quoted in Chalmers, 288.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 288.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 288-289.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 289.

"were not unjust."<sup>66</sup> The divisional boards had acted to put a qualified teacher in every classroom, they had improved health services, increasingly made high school education available to every child, and equalized the school tax rates.

As a further bonus, wrote Chalmers, rural children attending centralized schools "helped breakdown the hostility and suspicion with which town and country children commonly regarded each other."<sup>67</sup>

By 1940, the organization of the province into school divisions had been, for the most part, completed. It was, however, the next big advance which caused friction. According to Chalmers:

Formation of the divisions had resulted in centralization of administration; the next logical step was centralization of instruction. . . . [This] would confer unnumbered benefits. First it would make obsolete the ungraded classrooms, . . . . each teacher would have not more than three grades in his [or her] classroom. Better teachers could be found and retained. With large elementary schools, adequate high schools would be possible. . . . The very presence of more children in a grade would introduce . . . competition and emulation.<sup>68</sup>

Unfortunately, the Second World War seriously impeded progress toward these goals. As has already been documented, Alberta's chronic shortage of teachers was exacerbated by the global conflict. This situation would continue until well

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<sup>66</sup>Chalmers, Schools, 289.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 290.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 291.

after the war. That this concerned Swift is evident from his comments in the Department's Annual Report of 1946:

The year 1946 must be recorded as being a most difficult and trying one from the standpoint of school administration. The continued and increased shortage of teachers has not only deprived thousands of children of a proper educational opportunity but has imposed upon school authorities . . . a great burden of effort, worry and public discontent. While only 52 schools were without some sort of service at the end of the year, the superintendents reported that about 1,500 rooms were either without service or were being supplied in some makeshift or inferior manner.<sup>69</sup>

In addition to the lack of teachers, the lack of labour, equipment or supplies available to build new schools at central points, and a shortage of appropriate transport and the sometimes poor or nonexistent roads<sup>70</sup>, resulted in many of the planned projects being put in a holding pattern until the end of the war. Sometimes, as in the case of the Atlee - Jenner dispute, the undertaking might be delayed until many years later.<sup>71</sup> This was confirmed by Swift's last Minister

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<sup>69</sup>Annual Report of the Department of Education, Province of Alberta, 1946. P.A.A. Acc. No. 68.232. 8.

<sup>70</sup>According to Chalmers in Schools of the Foothills Province, the issue of roads was a great source of friction after the centralizations came into effect. He pointed out that "the school trustees often appeared intransigent when they were requested to build, maintain, and clear the roads needed for school bus operations"., 294. This might have had a direct bearing on the Atlee-Jenner dispute, since one of the major issues revolved around the unsafe road the students upon which the students were required to travel.

<sup>71</sup>In fact, a similar dispute involving the same Medicine Hat School Division and the residents of Buffalo was still raging as late as 1963. In this case it was over the busing of pupils then attending Buffalo school to Blindloss, twenty miles distant. Correspondence: April 3, 1963, from the

of Education, R. H. McKinnon. When queried about the Jenner case, he recalled that there were:

big fusses down there, particularly in the south. They didn't want to lose their local schools. There were some of those schools that were left over by the 1950s. They just didn't want their kids bused anywhere. What happened was we put the division in anyway but allowed the schools to sit there for a while until things sorted themselves out.<sup>72</sup>

However, by the end of 1945, Alberta's pre-war total of three thousand one-room schools had shrunk to about two thousand.<sup>73</sup>

Chalmers wrote that before the divisional movement could really reach maturity, there had to be points where they could centralize. These points were the town and village districts where there were already multi-room schools to serve as focus for the proposed central schools. The inclusion of these districts to the divisions was seen, therefore, as essential. For the most part these inclusions offered enough benefits to each side that "ultimately about two hundred agreements were completed."<sup>74</sup>

According to Chalmers, the transition from district to divisional control did not always go as smoothly as the

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Concerned Parents of Children Attending Buffalo School to The Rt. Honorable E.C. Manning, Cypress Hills School Divisional Records, Files 38-141, Calgary Glenbow Archives.

<sup>72</sup>Personal interview with R.H. McKinnon, former Minister of Education for the Province of Alberta, 1964-1967, January 26, 1998.

<sup>73</sup>Chalmers, Schools, 291.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 292.

Department would have liked. "In many cases, the district was unwilling to surrender control of its school system, expressing its aversion either through the action of its board or through a plebiscite."<sup>75</sup> However, by 1964, there were only seven independent consolidated districts left in the Province. Two independent village public school districts still existed, and fifteen town districts.<sup>76</sup> It is from within this milieu, then, that the Atlee case can best be understood.

The first mention of the Atlee dispute, according to the documentary evidence, appears to be a letter, dated March 26, 1956, from Mrs. George Howe, wife of the Atlee School Chairman, addressed to "The Department of Education." The letter simply inquired as to whether or not people could be forced into a centralized school, "seventeen or twenty-five miles from our present school?"<sup>77</sup> The letter went on to explain that the majority of residents of this "isolated" area were quite happy with their present school.<sup>78</sup> Mrs. Howe

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 292.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 293.

<sup>77</sup>Correspondence from Mrs. George W. Howe to The Department of Education, March 26, 1956. Cypress Hills School Divisional Records, Files 138-141, Calgary - Glenbow Archives.

<sup>78</sup>It should be noted that the number of families involved in this affair never numbered more than five, with a population of twelve school age children. Correspondence, A.T. Shand, Secretary Treasurer, Medicine Hat School Division No. 4, to "All parents in the Atlee School Attendance Area", September 26, 1958. Cypress Hills School Divisional Records, Files, 138-141, Calgary-Glenbow Archives.



closed with a request for a copy of the "School Act."<sup>79</sup> Since no other correspondence appears until the 1957 school year, it must be assumed that things remained as they were for the balance of the year.

In 1957, however, things became more serious. Atlee parents balked at the Divisional Board's decision to close down their school. According to a communication addressed to J.W. Chalmers, then Swift's Assistant Director of School Administration at the Department of Education, the board's reasons for this action were the following:

- a. The move was a part of the planned centralization of the school facilities in the Jenner area.
- b. The present enrolment at Jenner is only 20 with two qualified teachers on staff.
- c. The Jenner school is a new, fully modern building, and no opposition to the vaning was registered until construction was almost completed.
- d. The van driver has purchased a new 4-wheel drive van for the route and has been given a three-year contract.
- e. The Special Areas Board promised to carry out road improvements to carry out vaning.
- f. Correspondence courses were not acceptable to the Atlee residents.
- g. Other centralizations might be adversely affected by a reversal of the Board's decision at Atlee.<sup>80</sup>

Three days earlier the parents of Atlee had outlined their objections to the proposed move in a letter to the

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<sup>79</sup>Mrs. G.R. Howe to Department of Education, March 26, 1956.

<sup>80</sup>Correspondence, A.T. Shand, Secretary Treasurer, Medicine Hat School Division to Dr. J.W. Chalmers, Assistant Director of School Administration, Department of Education, October 11, 1957. Cypress Hills Divisional Records, Calgary-Glenbow Archives.

Division. They contended that they were worried about the "danger and inconvenience of sending the children 53 miles each way to and from the school at Jenner."<sup>81</sup> The letter went on to say that "although this is a main road for that part of the country it has always been recognized as a dangerous highway, there being several blind hills and bad curves."<sup>82</sup> The communication goes on to describe how several accidents had occurred on the road in the past months, that it became particularly hazardous in winter, and that there were only three houses on the entire route and no telephone in case of emergency.<sup>83</sup> In view of this, the letter went on,

we are sure that the mothers of some of the children will refuse to allow the pupils to attend on days when the weather outlook is bad. Perhaps the parents have no legal right to do so but it is almost a certainty that it will be done, and we feel that any plan of the Board which would result in such a situation should be carefully reconsidered.<sup>84</sup>

By the end of October, 1957, the crisis had reached the point where Swift became involved. A meeting of all divisional board members was held at the Palliser Hotel in Calgary on Wednesday, November 6. A circular pointed out that

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<sup>81</sup>It is of interest that in all other accounts concerning this issue, the mileage adds up to 38. Correspondence from The Parents of Atlee to The Chairman, Divisional Board, Medicine Hat School Division No.4, October 8, 1957. Calgary-Glenbow Archives.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

Swift (mistakenly referred to as the Minister!) and J.W. Chalmers wanted to meet with the full board, "in connection with recent happenings concerning the non-attendance at school of pupils in the Atlee area."<sup>85</sup>

No record exists regarding the meeting itself but the result, according to the Medicine Hat News, was that apparently "the board finally relented" and permitted the children to complete their studies at the Atlee school for the remainder of the year.<sup>86</sup>

Just prior to the beginning of the 1958 school year, the the board of School Division no. 4 once again informed Atlee parents of the provision of "school bus service for the pupils of Grades I to IX, inclusive . . . , so that they may be able to attend Jenner school."<sup>87</sup> The letter concluded with the board's statement that it did "not intend to operate the Atlee school" and that "two qualified teachers" had been engaged to operate the school at Jenner.<sup>88</sup> It further stated that if the present Atlee teacher wished to transfer to Jenner, "three

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<sup>85</sup>Circular addressed to All Divisional Board Members from A.T. Shand, Secretary Treasurer, Medicine Hat School Division No. 4., October 30, 1957. Cypress Hills Divisional Records, Calgary-Glenbow Archives.

<sup>86</sup>The Medicine Hat News, August 28, 1958.

<sup>87</sup>Correspondence to "All Parents in the Atlee School Attendance Area" from Medicine Hat School Division No. 4, August 29, 1958. Cypress Hills School Divisional Records, Calgary-Glenbow Archives.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

rooms would be operated there."<sup>89</sup> Once again, the Atlee parents protested.

Almost simultaneously the press picked up on the story and came down resoundingly on the side of the Atlee residents. The front page headline in the Medicine Hat News read: "Atlee Issue Flares: Parents Balk at School Bus."<sup>90</sup> According to the article, James Walsh, the secretary of the Atlee School Board stated that they had been promised the previous year, when the school had re-opened, that "no further action would be taken for at least a year until road repairs were made."<sup>91</sup> Moreover, Walsh continued, at a meeting of School Division No. 4 at Blindloss, in February of 1958, they had been "assured the matter would not come up again until June 1959."<sup>92</sup> He went on to state that they had "heard nothing more about it until August 21, when a notice was posted . . . advertising for school bus tenders and we realized they were going to go ahead with it."<sup>93</sup> Walsh concluded by stating that:

It might be a different matter if the road had been repaired as promised, . . . but conditions there are as bad as ever . . . and our stand is still the same. We will not send our children to school in Jenner until safe transportation is provided.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

<sup>90</sup>The Medicine Hat News, August 28, 1958.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

Work on the road was not scheduled to begin until September 1, of that year.<sup>95</sup>

On behalf of the Board, Secretary Shand stated that:

Atlee residents should have been well aware that this was going to happen . . . . The agreement reached last November was effective only for the remainder of the school year . . . . We will provide our own bus service and the roads will be repaired in due course. This is merely a continuation of last year's plans.<sup>96</sup>

Shand held that the Atlee parents had a "weak argument" with regard to the nineteen mile distance the children would have to travel, as "many youngsters have to travel further."<sup>97</sup> To this, another board member added that the road in question was "no worse than any other average district road."<sup>98</sup> Shand concluded by stating that there would be "a possibility of prosecution if they [the Atlee parents] keep their children out of school."<sup>99</sup>

The sparring through the press carried on for nearly two months with neither the Board nor the Atlee parents willing to budge. By now, the dispute had come to the attention of the Calgary papers. The Calgary Herald portrayed the affair as a guerrilla war being fought by the residents of Atlee against the overwhelming might of the Department of Education and

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<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

their agents, the Board of Medicine Hat School Division No. 4. In October of 1958, the Herald summarized the issue in the following manner:

This tiny community, sixty miles northwest of Medicine Hat, shows every sign of continuing its war against the forces of the Alberta Department of Education. Parents who have been keeping their children out of school for the past two months [appear] . . . determined to keep on doing so until the war is won . . . . Lymon Davis who owns a bus and holds a contract to transport Atlee area youngsters to the new school, makes the trip between Atlee and Jenner twice daily with no more than one young passenger picked up six miles outside of Jenner.<sup>100</sup>

To make matters worse for the Board, the paper reported that on the night of October 2, the school bus carrying the driver and a teacher, returning from a meeting, was involved in an accident resulting in both men being hospitalized and the bus being put temporarily out of commission.<sup>101</sup> According to the Herald, it was "not known how the accident happened except that the bus went out of control and left the road,"<sup>102</sup> the same road earlier described by the Atlee parents as "dangerous" in both summer and winter.<sup>103</sup>

By late October, the Chairman and Trustees of School Division No. 4 were being accused of "bureaucratic

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<sup>100</sup>The Calgary Herald, October 3, 1958.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid.

<sup>103</sup>The Calgary Herald, September 8, 1958.

bungling."<sup>104</sup> The Medicine Hat News also pointed out that the district trustees were "permitting a waste of the taxpayers' money to the extent of twenty-five dollars per day on charges for a school bus which is occupied by only one student for only a fraction of the mileage."<sup>105</sup>

It is at a point early in September of 1958 that W.H. Swift appears in the surviving official correspondence pertaining to the matter. The issue, having been, according to Swift, "brought to the Minister's attention in various ways,"<sup>106</sup> had obviously become a concern for the Department. Earlier in September, for a few days, Atlee school had operated in defiance of the division's edict. However, when it was realized that this was an illegal action, the school was again closed, by ministerial order.<sup>107</sup>

After careful consideration Swift dispatched two superintendents, O.P. Larson from Brooks and N.M. Purvis from Taber, to assess the situation and submit a confidential report.<sup>108</sup> From his correspondence, it is evident that Swift was well aware of the relevant issues surrounding the case,

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<sup>104</sup>The Medicine Hat News, Oct 23, 1958.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid.

<sup>106</sup>The Minister of Education at the time was A.O. Aalborg. Correspondence from W.H. Swift to Superintendent O.P. Larson and Superintendent N.M. Purvis, September 11, 1958. Cypress Hills Divisional Records, Calgary-Glenbow Archives.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid.

probably due to the fact that he had helped broker a compromise between the two sides the previous year.<sup>109</sup> After succinctly outlining the substance of the dispute, and carefully giving each side their due, Swift clearly stated the Department of Education's position:

The Department has consistently taken the stand that this is a matter which rests within the jurisdiction of the Medicine Hat School Divisional Board having regard to the provisions of the School Act and that no power resides in the Minister or Department to require the Medicine Hat School Division to reopen the Atlee School supposing it were the view of the Department that this would be the preferable arrangement [sic]. Nevertheless, . . . we feel under some obligation to make a serious study of the situation.<sup>110</sup>

On September 23, as a result of the reports submitted by Larson and Purvis, Swift recommended to the Medicine Hat Board that the Atlee School be re-opened. He further recommended that "consultations be entered into with the Atlee people in good time in 1959" if the board had then, "as a result of changed conditions or for other reason, intention to change the situation at Atlee."<sup>111</sup> The factors by which Swift arrived at this decision were once again concisely outlined:

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<sup>109</sup>The Medicine Hat News, August 28, 1958. Details of the meeting were also outlined in a circular addressed to All Divisional Board Members from A.T. Shand, Secretary Treasurer, Medicine Hat School Division No. 4., October 30, 1957. Cypress Hills Divisional Records, Calgary-Glenbow Archives.

<sup>110</sup>Correspondence from W.H. Swift to Superintendent O.P. Larson and Superintendent N.M. Purvis, September 11, 1958. Cypress Hills Divisional Records, Calgary-Glenbow Archives.

<sup>111</sup>Correspondence, Swift to the Board of the Medicine Hat School Division No. 4, September 23, 1958.



1. While it is no fault of your board the road is still not improved, this was a factor a year ago and still remains a factor. Admittedly there may be differences of opinion as to whether the road is suitable for a school bus but we think that the Atlee people have some justification for their view that centralization should not be forced until the prospective road work is completed.

2. The inclusion of Atlee has been urged as a necessity to provide enough pupils for a two-room school. Such was perhaps true a year ago but there now seem to be 45 pupils without Atlee which warrants two rooms.

3. We question that a two-room school is sufficiently superior to a one-room school of low enrolment to warrant the forcing of extensive transportation of pupils upon reluctant parents.

4. There will be no significant financial saving, if any, to the division if the Atlee school is closed.<sup>112</sup>

Swift concluded by recognizing that to open the school after all the controversy would be "something of an embarrassment" to the board, but believed that the Department's investigators had "looked into the situation impartially."<sup>113</sup>

According to an editorial in The Medicine Hat News, "legally the board of School Division No. 4 and Education Minister A.O. Aalborg acted quite properly in ordering that classes in Atlee School cease," because of unauthorized use of property.<sup>114</sup> The paper went on to point out that:

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<sup>112</sup>Ibid.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid.

<sup>114</sup>The Medicine Hat News, September 9, 1958.

Morally, however, both the school board and the education department should do considerably more than order the school closed, stand pat on its order that the 15 pupils must travel daily by bus to and from Jenner, 19 miles away, and talk about laying charges against those parents who refuse to let their children ride the bus. Somehow or other, steps should be taken to permit the children to attend the Atlee School legally, at least until there is evidence the road to Jenner has been repaired to the extent the bus runs can be made in safety.<sup>115</sup>

Obviously, Swift chose to act on the moral issue in this case.

Still, the Divisional Board would not relent. A few days after receiving Swift's recommendations, notice was sent back to him that the Divisional Board had decided, in spite of the Department's recommendations, that the Atlee School would be closed. In addition, wrote Board Secretary A.T. Shand, the Board had the following comments to offer on Swift's letter. First of all, in the Board's opinion, school bus transportation in many other parts of the Division and throughout the Province would be seriously curtailed if service was only permitted on roads superior to the Jenner-Atlee highway. The Board, the letter continued, did not feel justified in postponing vanning to Jenner for another full year when work is actually underway to improve the road at a cost of twenty thousand dollars. Shand's letter concluded by stating that the Board was more concerned with offering an improved education to the Atlee pupils than with effecting any

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<sup>115</sup>Ibid.

saving as had been implied by Swift.<sup>116</sup>

The same day, the Atlee parents were informed of the Board's decision in a rather terse communication. The notice read:

At a special meeting of the Divisional Board yesterday, the Board directed that you be notified that under no circumstances is it prepared to re-open the Atlee School. Furthermore, the present school bus service which has been provided so that your children may attend the Jenner School is to be discontinued after Friday, October 3, 1958, unless you indicate that you intend to make use of this service . . . . If your children are not in attendance at the Jenner School by October 3, 1958, the Board is recommending to the Minister of Education that the Atlee and Valley Springs School Districts be excluded from this Division.<sup>117</sup>

On September 27, The Medicine Hat News roundly criticized the Divisional Board, labeling them as incompetents. The newspaper accused the board of "blindly charging off in the wrong direction over the Atlee school question for the past month."<sup>118</sup> The story went on to describe how the board had refused help in "getting on the right path."<sup>119</sup> It described how Swift had advised them to re-open the Atlee School and

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<sup>116</sup>Correspondence A.T. Shand, Secretary-Treasurer, Medicine Hat School Division No. 4, to The Deputy Minister, Department of Education, September 26, 1958. Cypress Hills Divisional Records, Calgary-Glenbow Archives.

<sup>117</sup>Correspondence from A.T. Shand, Secretary-Treasurer, Medicine Hat School Division No. 4 to All Parents in the Atlee School Attendance Area, September 26, 1958. Cypress Hills Divisional Records, Calgary-Glenbow Archives.

<sup>118</sup>The Medicine Hat News, September 27, 1958.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid.

that "in a welter of whereases [sic], the board had said no."<sup>120</sup> Thus, the paper went on, "in addition to flying in the face of the people of Atlee - whose servants they are supposed to be - members of the board are now acting against the best advice of the Department of Education."<sup>121</sup> It further speculated that since the board refused to divulge the exact contents of Swift's letter, it had to be assumed that the board had something to hide.<sup>122</sup> The editorial concluded by pointing out that:

Now having threatened legal action against the recalcitrant Atlee parents, the board is asking that Atlee be excluded from the School Division. It's about time that something like that happened - the board of School Division No.4 has shown no indication whatsoever that it is competent to deal with the situation.<sup>123</sup>

A final example of official correspondence from the year 1958 seems to effectively end the dispute. In a typically well organized and precise letter, Swift clearly outlined the alternatives available to the Atlee parents. He acknowledged that the parents had been given a deadline by the board for bussing to Jenner and that failure to comply would result in exclusion from Medicine Hat School Division No.4. According to Swift, this would probably involve also the exclusion of the Valley Springs District and also some unaffiliated

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<sup>120</sup>Ibid.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid.

families that did not reside in any district. The two options, therefore, appeared to be:

1. For attendance at Jenner to be accepted.
2. For the districts to be removed, to elect their own school boards, and to operate their affairs independently. This means reverting to the status which existed before the erection of the divisions.<sup>124</sup>

The letter pointed out that it had been the hope of the Department that the Division would accede to its recommendation. "It's clear, however, that it will not and so the situation as it now stands must be faced."<sup>125</sup>

Swift went on to caution that since operation as an independent district appeared to be the most likely alternative, that "the most careful consideration be given to forcing this step."<sup>126</sup> He pointed out that:

It seems to us that if the district is made independent its re-acceptance by the Division would not reasonably be expected if in one, two, three or more years changed circumstances made this desirable. [As well], . . . what is the future of school service in your district if:

1. No teacher is available locally?
2. The school population should diminish?
3. High School service is needed?
4. Centralization arrangements become more attractive?<sup>127</sup>

Swift concluded the letter by observing that the

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<sup>124</sup>Correspondence, Swift to James Walsh, Secretary, Atlee School Division, September 29, 1958. Cypress Hills Divisional Records, Calgary-Glenbow Archives.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid.

Department had attempted to assist the parents of Atlee in getting their school re-opened under the auspices of the Division. This had not been possible. The Department, however, we are still inclined to the view that "for the long term educational advantage of [their] . . . district more [was] . . . likely to be gained by staying with the Division than by accepting independent status."<sup>128</sup>

On October 4, 1958, a storyline in the Calgary Herald proclaimed: "Parents Win Rural War With School Re-opened: Strike Ends; Bus Service Cancelled."<sup>129</sup> The story, calling the Atlee School "the last of the one-room schools", pointed out that it was "strange that the centralization process should be thwarted now, after it [was] . . . almost complete."<sup>130</sup> The Atlee people, the paper pointed out, put up stronger objection than parents and ratepayers elsewhere, and succeeded. The article concluded by speculating on "what would have happened to the centralization process if other parents had been as vigorous in their protest."<sup>131</sup>

While Bill Swift's role in this affair as Deputy Minister was largely the delegation of tasks seemingly arrived at by consensus within the appropriate divisions in the Department of Education, he nevertheless seemed to be the focal point in

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<sup>128</sup>Ibid.

<sup>129</sup>The Calgary Herald, October 4, 1958.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid.

the Department's communications to the different sides in the dispute. It was Swift who was most often looked upon to provide the correct interpretation of the School Act, and thus clearly articulate the Government's position. According to R.H. McKinnon, Swift was:

Very meticulous, very much concerned with etiquette and the laws and so on. If you needed to do a certain thing, and had to look at the legislation proper, he was the man. He spent all his time as Deputy Minister trying to get the School Act so that it would not need any changes, to perfect it, an almost impossible task because of the way things changed. He was certainly excellent when it came time to figure out what should be the next move.<sup>132</sup>

However, as evidenced by his actions in this dispute, Swift could see that the Atlee parents had legitimate complaints. Even though the Division was well within its rights to enforce bussing to Jenner, there was a moral imperative that had to take precedence in this case. Swift was not so bound by the rules of convention and the School Act that a decision could not be made for the general good of the children of Atlee.

As an epilogue, it is of interest to note that, according to an official ministerial order dated April 29, 1965, R.H. McKinnon included "the Atlee School District No. 3389 in the Medicine Hat School Division No.4."<sup>133</sup> This order was to take effect on May 3, 1965.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup>Personal interview with R.H. McKinnon, January 26, 1998

<sup>133</sup>Ministerial order from R.H. McKinnon to W.H. Swift, April 29, 1965. Cypress Hills Divisional Correspondence, Calgary-Glenbow Archives.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid.

### Expansion and Decision by Committee

Largely as a result of Swift's views and activities in issues such as the Jenner-Atlee dispute, steps were taken to improve the Department's relationships with organizations and the public. For example he organized semi-annual meetings between the officers of the Alberta Teachers' Association and the Alberta School Trustees Association.<sup>135</sup> Similarly, Swift developed a close relationship with the Alberta School Trustees Association (A.S.T.A.). He was also heavily involved with the Home and School movement.<sup>136</sup>

Swift, of course, was keenly interested and became involved in curriculum revision. He remembered that "with the growing school system and the expansion of offerings available in the schools, curriculum work greatly expanded."<sup>137</sup> Teachers were also more interested in becoming directly involved with curriculum development. Eventually, a Director of Curriculum was appointed. With the approval of the Minister, Swift established four curriculum committees.

There was a General Curriculum Committee of perhaps 25 people on which, in addition to some professionals there were representatives, chosen by them, of a number of segments in society, labour, business, agriculture, Home and School, and others. It met once or twice a year to judge and discuss what the schools were doing. They met for a full day. I usually attended for an hour or so. I might observe that the input from the lay people

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<sup>135</sup>Ibid.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid.

<sup>137</sup>W.H. Swift, unpublished memoirs, n.d.



was usually quite limited.<sup>138</sup>

The other curriculum committees were, according to Swift, the Elementary, the Junior High School, and the High School. Their membership included appropriate persons from the Departmental staff, local supervisory staffs, and especially teachers of high repute. All decisions and recommendations were, under the Department of Education Act, subject to the final approval of the minister, which was usually, but not always, given.

The essential point, for Swift, was that, whereas under the Newland regime, curriculum was established largely on the dicta of one man, there was now much more general consultation. Swift did caution, however, that "the weakness of this, as with any hierarchy of committees, [was]. . . that things get done more slowly, and more expensively since all committee members from outside the Department had their expenses paid; there were no honoraria."<sup>139</sup>

Swift knew from his experiences as a school inspector the problems local school boards had in raising capital. There had always been little money going to school boards for the building of schools. Money was obtained by way of debenture issues which had to be repaid out of local taxation. According to Swift:

As oil revenues began to come in, the province

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<sup>138</sup>Ibid.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid.

was able to do more for municipalities and school districts. There was passed The School Buildings Act under which grants to assist with construction were given. The formula varied from time to time but was chiefly related to approved square footage.<sup>140</sup>

Similarly, during Swift's tenure, there was established for the first time monetary assistance to students, through grants and loans. This was done under The Students Assistance Act. Swift, as Deputy Minister, was named the Chairman of the first board. He noted that, eventually, "the volume of business escalated and in due course a full-time chairman was appointed."<sup>141</sup>

All of the above involved much administrative work and direct involvement on the part of Swift. As well, it involved the inevitable increase of departmental staff to take care of these and other new activities, such as a film branch and a radio broadcasts branch.

In terms of his direct responsibility for the implementation of policy, Swift stated that he "had quite a bit of influence."<sup>142</sup> This extended in two directions, up toward the Minister, and down throughout the rest of the Department. Swift recalled, in 1994, that:

. . . all the Ministers I had were considerate of my views and opinions, they didn't necessarily do what I would have preferred to see done.

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<sup>140</sup>Ibid.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid.

<sup>142</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 17, 1994.

However, of course, you have to think in terms of the political aspects, as well as the strictly educational ones. Also, of course, I relied a great deal on the people below me for the development of policy. One thing I should mention is that when I took over, [as Deputy Minister] just after Newland left, . . . we appointed a Director of Curriculum, the Department was reorganized because the old term "Supervisor of Schools", nobody knew what it meant [sic]. In this reorganization there was established the position of Chief Inspector of Schools, later changed to Chief Superintendent of Schools, and the Director of Curriculum. With that went a series of committees, and a great deal of what was developing in education came up through their efforts. Of course, ultimately, they came from me. And from me to the Minister. Although those committees had great influence, they did not have actual authority. The authority came from the Department of Education and was vested in the Minister of Education.<sup>143</sup>

Twice, 1958 and 1962, Swift was a member of Canada's delegation to the biennial general meeting of UNESCO in Paris. Under the charter each member nation was required to have a national commission. Swift pointed out that, in his opinion, these:

were not . . . very active or useful bodies. The Canadian one met only once a year, in Ottawa, and in two days did its best to analyze and comment upon the voluminous and detailed proposed budget for the next biennium. Shortly after my retirement I was asked to go through this document, prior to the commission meeting, and submit a report with my analysis, criticisms and recommendations.<sup>144</sup>

In 1966, Swift retired from his position as Deputy

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<sup>143</sup>Ibid.

<sup>144</sup>W.H. Swift, unpublished memoirs, n.d.

Minister, at age 62.<sup>145</sup> He pointed out that he:

was approaching being Deputy Minister for twenty years; and it seemed to me that it was a pretty long time to hold that position. I wasn't tired of it and I was in good health, and mentally I was in full capacity, as far as I knew. At the same time, I could look behind me and I could see, 'there's Tim Byrne, and there's Bob Rees, and others', and there they were, all sitting in their positions. It seemed to me that there were a few of these people, way down the line, that could have a promotion if I got out of the way.<sup>146</sup>

Swift recalled that the Minister, Randy McKinnon pointed out that he had been discussing Swift's retirement proposal with Cabinet, and that the Cabinet did not want him to resign. Apparently McKinnon then said, "But if you have your mind firmly made up to do this, the Cabinet wants you to become the first Chairman of the Universities Commission."<sup>147</sup>

#### Alberta Universities Commission - 1966-68

In 1966 a new Universities Act was passed by the Legislature. Swift was very much involved in the writing of this legislation. In The University and I, he pointed out that he "drafted the bill, within which, the Legislative

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<sup>145</sup>Ibid.

<sup>146</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, May 14, 1994.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid.

Council found little to modify."<sup>148</sup>

The Act had two major provisions. First, it provided that whereas previously there was authorized only one university, The University of Alberta, there could now be other universities in the province. It specifically provided that the Calgary branch and campus should become a university in its own right. Moves were also on the way for the Lethbridge Junior College to be split into two independent parts, a continuing community college and a university of Lethbridge.<sup>149</sup> The second provision held that whereas the formal relationship between the U. of A. and the provincial government had been occasional meetings between the Premier and the Minister of Education on one side and the President and Chancellor on the other, there was established an Alberta Universities Commission which would act as go-between, the government being at arms-length from the universities.<sup>150</sup> Two further changes were also significant. First, while under the previous Act, the Deputy Ministers of Education and Treasury were ex-officio members of the Board of Governors of the University of Alberta, they now became members of the Universities Commission. Second, whereas the President of the University of Alberta had been a direct appointee of the

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<sup>148</sup>W.H. Swift, "The University and I", unpublished manuscript, University of Alberta Archives, 1981, 38.

<sup>149</sup>W.H. Swift, unpublished memoirs, n.d.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid.

provincial government the appointment of presidents now resided in the Boards of Governors of the respective universities.<sup>151</sup>

Swift was invited, then, after twenty years as Deputy Minister, to become the first Commission Chairman. His goals were to bring it into operation and set in motion the responsibilities conferred upon it.<sup>152</sup> According to Swift:

These responsibilities were many, varied and often complex. There was the division of assets and liabilities between University of Alberta and University of Calgary. There were the problems of space as enrolments were climbing. There was the amount of annual grant to be recommended on behalf of the universities, both operational and capital, to the Government, and when provided by the legislative budget, apportioned among the universities. Each institution was, of course, thoroughly convinced that it had special needs and priorities. To some extent the Commission was able to produce formulae but these were inevitably subjective.<sup>153</sup>

Swift's Calgary connection went back to his days as principal of the Normal School. Calgary's first step towards autonomy, according to Swift, went back to 1945 when the Normal School became a part of the Faculty of Education. Over the years a number of changes took place. The operation became a Branch. It had a Director, or a Principal, and eventually a President, even though it was a part of the University of Alberta. According to Swift, "it made for a

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<sup>151</sup>W.H. Swift, "The University and I", 38.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid.

<sup>153</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, May 10, 1996.

peculiar situation in which there was the main president, in charge of the whole, and the regional president with certain local powers and responsibilities."<sup>154</sup> Over time, the status of the faculty at Calgary gradually changed, with more authority over courses and procedures being granted to the local campus.<sup>155</sup>

Through the 1950s and on into the 1960s an increasing demand for autonomy was building up, both from within the faculty and among influential Calgarians. According to Swift, the gradual changes that had taken place to that point had been instituted "by way of appeasement."<sup>156</sup> In the main, Swift continued, "the Edmonton establishment did not wish to see the dismemberment of a university having a province-wide domain."<sup>157</sup> There had been precedents, however. The University of California and those in Oregon and Montana had successful operations with multiple campuses by that time.

According to Swift:

It seemed to me . . . , having regard to the increasing responsibilities being transferred to Calgary, and the general climate of opinion there, that the time for autonomy had come. Subsequently prior to a board meeting I telephoned the chairman of the board, C.M. Macleod, and informed him that it was my intention to raise at the meeting the question of autonomy for Calgary. This would have been the meeting of 29 January, 1964 . . . . In

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<sup>154</sup>W.H. Swift, "The University and I", 38.

<sup>155</sup>Ibid., 38.

<sup>156</sup>Ibid., 38.

<sup>157</sup>Ibid., 39.

due course I proposed a motion, which called for the matter to be studied. There was considerable discussion as might well be expected. In the main the board seemed favourable to some action, but there were differences of view as to details.<sup>158</sup>

Next followed a remarkable turn of events which Swift remembered with some bitterness. He and a member of the Calgary board were designated to work out a revised draft to be brought back to the meeting after the lunch break. This was done, and much to Swift's "surprise and annoyance", the Calgary member "immediately moved the revised motion, so in the official minutes it stands."<sup>159</sup> According to Swift, this was, in a sense, "the inception of the University of Calgary - in his name rather than mine!"

A committee under Mr. Justice Hugh John MacDonald was created, "the first of a number of groups that got into the act."<sup>160</sup> Eventually, the Government itself became involved and the result was the Universities Act of 1966.

According to Swift's last Minister of Education, R.H. McKinnon, Swift was the ideal candidate for the position as Chairman.

He never left out any small details. He was a great Chairman, a facilitator, that sort of thing. He always had everything thought out in advance. He was, for example, the first Chairman of the Universities Commission. There was no doubt about the choice, even though there were several strong individuals on it. He had the experience. He had

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<sup>158</sup>W.H. Swift, "The University and I", 40.

<sup>159</sup>Ibid., 39.

<sup>160</sup>Ibid., 39.



been on the senate of the University of Alberta and he knew the troubles that we'd been having with universities. One of the main ones being to get staff. Also to get the buildings because the baby-boom generation were beginning to enter higher education, to universities and to junior colleges, adult vocational centres and so on. . . . But he was very meticulous and when he set up a meeting he knew exactly what it was he wanted to accomplish. All this was done forthrightly [sic].<sup>161</sup>

The negotiations leading up to the creation of the University of Lethbridge, stand as testimony to McKinnon's comments. O.G. Holmes noted that:

It would be unfair not to acknowledge the prodigious efforts on the part of W.H. Swift of the Universities Commission to clear the way for the advent of the new university. Within the severe constraints imposed by the government's lack of definition of the institutional transformation, Swift offered sound advice, attempted to anticipate trouble, and discharged efficiently those functions exclusively within the Commission's domain.<sup>162</sup>

Holmes continued in his praise of Swift's actions, pointing out that:

After a sizable volume of preliminary correspondence, the Commission, in the person of its Chairman, W.H. Swift, met with the board of governors . . . in order to discuss financial matters. Although the commission itself had been in existence for only a few months, Swift was able to describe the processes that were evolving whereby the Commission would act as the intermediary between government and university with respect to the allocation of grants.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>161</sup>Personal interview with R.H. McKinnon, January 26, 1998.

<sup>162</sup>Owen G. Holmes, Come Hell Or High Water, (Lethbridge: The Lethbridge Herald, 1972), 58.

<sup>163</sup>Ibid., 73.

In his second year as Chairman of the Commission, Swift was invited to tell the Canadian Association of Universities and Colleges meeting in Ottawa, "what kind of creature we were and how we operated."<sup>164</sup> In an example of his dry wit, he pointed out that he:

. . . told about our attempts to make use of some reasonably objective formulae. I concluded by saying that we were now working on an 'Index of Dissatisfaction'. Using this, if all three universities were equally dissatisfied with what we had done it was probably the best that could be done.<sup>165</sup>

According to Swift, the Commission "made some effort to rationalize the offerings at the three universities . . . by establishing a tri-university committee to consider and advise on some of the problems [and] . . . to prevent undue duplication."<sup>166</sup> However, this proved to be a difficult task, due to the rate of growth at each institution.<sup>167</sup>

In 1968, in accordance with his original intention, Swift retired from this position, "taking his pension."<sup>168</sup> That his tenure in this office had been judged acceptable under the trying circumstances seemed confirmed when each university in turn awarded him an honorary doctorate.

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<sup>164</sup>Ibid.

<sup>165</sup>W.H. Swift, unpublished memoirs, n.d.

<sup>166</sup>Ibid.

<sup>167</sup>Ibid.

<sup>168</sup>W.H. Swift, unpublished memoirs, n.d.

### Post-Retirement Activities

Over the years following retirement Swift was engaged in a number of activities which called for his expertise. The first of these was in the matter of the relationship between the provincial government and the hospitals of the province. Each dealt directly with the Department of Health and in particular with an official in whom was vested very considerable authority affecting operational and capital grants. Much controversy and disaffection had developed which caused the government some concern. Consideration was being given to the establishment of a Hospital Commission, somewhat similar to the Universities Commission. Such had been done in some other provinces. Swift was engaged to make inquiry into the relative merits of having hospitals deal with such a commission and dealing directly with a Department of Health. While Swift's report covered considerable ground its chief conclusion was that "the effective and compatible relationships depended primarily on the capacities and the personalities of the persons involved, and especially the chief officer involved whether a departmental director or a commission chairman."<sup>169</sup> In the end "the government decided not to set up a commission but did some reorganizing of its staff and structure."<sup>170</sup>

There followed other short term activities such as work

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<sup>169</sup>W.H. Swift, unpublished memoirs, n.d.

<sup>170</sup>Ibid.

on the University of Alberta Board of Arbitration; the Chairmanship of the Canadian Education Association's Survey Committee which examined the efficacy of the Association; the successful arbitration of a, then bitter, dispute between the Bonnyville town school board and the board of the surrounding school division.<sup>171</sup>

In 1968 Dr. A.W. Reeves, Chairman of Educational Administration at the University of Alberta, passed away suddenly while on sabbatical in California. Friends and associates contributed to a fund to provide some sort of memorial in recognition of his work. In due course it was decided to dedicate a book to him which should take the form of a study and discussion of the state of educational administration in Canada, which was then beginning to emerge as a discipline within the general field of education. Swift was invited to join the editorial committee. According to Swift:

The actual writer was to have been Dr. H.T. Coutts, Dean of Education. Dr. Coutts found that he could not find the time to produce the book. I was called upon to take over with the result that the book, Educational Administration in Canada, a Memorial to A.W. Reeves<sup>172</sup>, was published in 1970.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup>Ibid.

<sup>172</sup>W.H. Swift, Educational Administration in Canada: A Memorial to A.W. Reeves, (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1970).

<sup>173</sup>Ibid.

Retirement caused no emotional problems for Bill Swift. "I seemed to find plenty to do, at least until the mid eighties."<sup>174</sup> According to Swift:

My wife Mary accepted it perfectly well. She had anticipated that it would be coming about and we just went on from where we were. I have heard of cases of retirement where the wife finds the man a nuisance around the house all the time, but this was not the case with me as I was always busy about something or another. So I don't think there was any problem there, as far as Mary was concerned.<sup>175</sup>

Swift had been an active member of the Edmonton Rotary Club for many years, serving as President in 1964-65 and, after his retirement, District Governor. He and Mary continued these activities for many years after Swift's retirement and he continued to serve on district and club committees.<sup>176</sup>

Church activities also continued to play a large role in Swift's life. At Knox United Church he had been involved in various ways, including being Chairman of the Board of Managers. In 1972 the congregation united with Metropolitan to form the combined congregation of Knox-Metropolitan. Swift served as one of the chief negotiators in bringing the union about, much as his father had done with the United Church in Tofield those many years before. Bill Swift also served in a

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<sup>174</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, May 25, 1994.

<sup>175</sup>Ibid.

<sup>176</sup>W.H. Swift, unpublished memoirs, n.d.

number of capacities in the new congregation as well.<sup>177</sup>

By 1989, Mary's health had begun to decline and Bill Swift found himself more and more involved with tending to her day to day needs. According to Swift:

Eventually, the time came when I was the complete housekeeper, homemaker, and, in the end, it became too much for me. From that time on, the last five years, my interests and activities steadily diminished.<sup>178</sup>

Mary Swift passed away in 1995.

By the early 1990s Swift's eyesight, a problem throughout his life, began to seriously deteriorate, a condition which further curtailed his activities. In 1996, W.H. (Bill) Swift died of heart failure. To the end of his life, Swift's mental capacities remained sharp, and his sense of humour, always shrewd, never waned. When his biographer would call to arrange yet another interview, often Bill Swift would answer, "Well, I'm still here!"

In the Annual Report of 1967 Tim Byrne, Deputy Minister of Education wrote of Swift, "In 1946 he became Deputy Minister of Education in which post he gave 20 years of brilliant leadership in the field of education in the Province."<sup>179</sup> In the usual fashion, Byrne went on to exalt Swift's accomplishments. What is significant here, however,

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<sup>177</sup>W.H. Swift, Unpublished Memoirs, n.d.

<sup>178</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, May 15, 1994.

<sup>179</sup> Annual Report of the Department of Education for the Province of Alberta, 1967, 120

is the varied terrain represented in the list of those educational changes in which he played a major role.

For example, his work on the establishment of the Coterminous Boundaries Commission rearranged boundaries of municipal and school areas so that they coincided. Related to this was the development of the County System in which local municipal and school governments were merged. Swift developed the School Buildings Act, the Students' Assistance Act and the developed the legislation establishing public junior colleges. Added to this, of course, was his influential work as Chair of the Universities Commission.

Swift's establishment of the Royal Commission on Education (Cameron Commission) in 1959 paved the way for the first wholesale evaluation of public education in the Province's history and led to many recommendations concerning curriculum, testing, pedagogy, philosophy, and the vocation of teaching and teacher training, that are still with us today. Swift was involved in the introduction of the Government subsidized school book rental plan and the building of the Alberta School for the Deaf. He was involved in the creation of the Northland School Division to give efficient educational facilities and organizations to isolated areas in Northern Alberta. Finally, his involvement in the vast and rapid expansion of facilities for vocational courses within the secondary school system of the province led to an

unprecedented school building and expansion program.<sup>180</sup>

As Byrne wrote: "These changes in education stand as a monument to the administrative acuity and educational leadership of Dr. Swift during his long years of service in the cause of education in Alberta."<sup>181</sup>

As well as his formidable administrative talents, we are also allowed some insight into Bill Swift, the human being. Here was a man capable of compassion, as his recommendations in the Atlee-Jenner case clearly showed. He was able to act on the basis of sound morality in this case. Swift had not lost sight of his roots as a rural educator. His experiences in the Athabasca territory had undoubtedly given him insight into the anxieties exhibited by the Atlee parents when confronted by the seemingly monolithic fiats of an educational bureacracy bent on progress. It is this "character" and the values and morals that go with it that this biographical endeavour next attempts to evaluate.

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<sup>180</sup>Ibid., 120.

<sup>181</sup>Annual Report of the Department of Education, Province of Alberta, 1967. P.A.A. Acc. No. 68.139. 7-9.



## CHAPTER VII THE PRAGMATIC ROTARIAN

This chapter will examine W.H. Swift's educational thought as a philosophic backdrop to his life as an educator, writer, and educational policy-maker. As an aid to understanding, comparisons will be made between Swift, his educational thought and his perception of correct policy, and the nineteenth century archetype of the senior bureaucrat as espoused by Henry Taylor.<sup>1</sup> Taylor was a nineteenth century writer who wrote, for all intents and purposes, a handbook on the duties and behavior expected of a senior civil servant in Britain at that time. The suggestion is made that Swift, through his behavior and the ease with which he adapted to the senior bureaucratic "attitude" manifested in the upper echelons of the Province's Department of Education, might have represented an example of this nineteenth century imperial "tradition."

This chapter also examines Swift's character and personality. It is argued that Swift represented an exemplar to his subordinates in the Department of education. In this regard, David Hart's typology of the "exemplar of virtue" will be used as an aid to understanding.

### **Educational Thought**

In 1994, Bill Swift was asked, rather bluntly, and perhaps naively, what his philosophy of education was. He

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<sup>1</sup>Henry Taylor, The Statesman.

pointed out that he was "puzzled and perplexed by that term!" After some thought, he decided that, "the answer . . . [was] very simple."<sup>2</sup> He argued that his "non-philosophy of education, so to speak,"<sup>3</sup> was that he was a pragmatist. Swift pointed out that when any question arose or proposal was presented, he would do his best to analyze it with respect to its inherent merits, and to the best of his ability.<sup>4</sup> For example, Swift held that:

If it was a matter of curriculum, I would ask: 'would the teachers actually do the thing'?[sic] Was it something that the teachers could feasibly do'? Even though it might be a worthwhile innovation, the teachers might not be skilled enough to do it. I also had to give some thought to whether or not the proposal might be acceptable to the Minister. [This was] because I didn't want to be in the position of too frequently coming to the Minister with a proposal that he would turn down. That would reflect, from his point of view, upon my judgement, you see. I wouldn't say it was a factor very often, but at times it was. So I would just tend to analyze whatever was proposed from whatever points of view I thought had some relevance to the issue and, insofar as I made a personal decision, that's the way it would be arrived at.<sup>5</sup>

Probably at the root of most disagreements over public education lies the question, what should education aim to do with the young? For example, should the curriculum reflect the teaching of "practical" or "useful" knowledge? Should

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<sup>2</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 17, 1994.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

public education be used to inculcate "proper" values or provide training in morality? Should it allow children to explore on their own, to choose their own path to knowledge, or should it be employed to promote compliancy?

In answer to this, Swift stressed the creation of "good citizens" as one of public education's fundamental goals. However, he qualified this in the following way:

A good citizen has to have good morals, he has to expect to make some contribution to society. At the same time, he needs to be knowledgable enough to be able to carry on with respect to life, to manage his monetary affairs, to do things in the business world. So it had to be a meld of [the] . . . academic, learning to read and write and do arithmetic acceptably, all of these were very important.<sup>6</sup>

Expanding on the issue, Swift argued that:

When it comes to morals, ethics, I know the schools had and have a great effect on their pupils, but it has never been, in my experience, a set policy that the schools should be doing this. That's partly . . . because it isn't possible to teach morality. It's something that young people will pick up from those with whom they are associated, for good or for bad. In the Normal School there was no course on morals, for example. Yet, we wanted to develop teachers who were good citizens and would have a good moral effect on the children. But we never taught 'morals'.<sup>7</sup>

In this, Swift agreed with educational historian Nancy Sheehan. Sheehan, writing with regard to Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1920-1950, argued that "the school has always attempted moral or ethical education, but has never provided

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<sup>6</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, May 14, 1994.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

the means for this goal to be accomplished."<sup>8</sup> Sheehan went on to contend that the result had been "a hit and miss affair of character training by example and by indoctrination, with no basis for reason."<sup>9</sup>

Theoretically, according to Swift, the church, at one time, attempted to do this through Sunday School. "There again", he argued, "it was largely academic instruction about the Bible."<sup>10</sup> From this, morality did not necessarily follow.

. . . although various characters in the Bible, and particularly Christ, could be pointed to as examples of persons who did a 'good thing', the 'right thing', who did something for their fellow man. Perhaps that would have some benefit. I would go on to say that the same was, and I presume, is, true at the University. I don't think any professor that I had ever spent much time teaching or attempting to teach us 'morality' and 'good citizenship'. But, I suppose the end result of schooling is to produce 'good citizens'.<sup>11</sup>

Closely allied to the concept of "citizenship", is "nationalism" or the "national spirit." Asked what part this should play in the education of the young, Swift pointed out that it hinged, to a large extent, on what one meant by the term nationalism. "What it means to one person is not the

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<sup>8</sup>Nancy M. Sheehan, "Indoctrination: Moral Education in the Early Prairie School House", in David C. Jones et.al. eds., Shaping the Schools of the Canadian West, (Calgary: Detselig, 1979), 233.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 233.

<sup>10</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, January 17, 1994.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

same as it means to another."<sup>12</sup> Swift believed that all of us as citizens should have an allegiance to our country, that we should be proud of it. That we should do what we can to make it a better place for everyone. As to the issue of multiculturalism vis a vis nationalism, Swift reasoned that there was no right or wrong in the debate. However, he came down on the side of what he termed, "integration."<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, he noted, he would not be a rabid flag-waver. "Although I must say, that it disappoints me on July 1, . . . that I don't see very many Canadian flags exposed. I think the flag is a good symbol of nationality."<sup>14</sup>

Swift's book, Trends in Canadian Education<sup>15</sup>, represents a microcosm of the relationship between Canadian society and education during the ten year period 1948 through 1958. Apart from clearly outlining his point of view on many aspects of schooling, it features his comments on such issues as the debate over the issue of progressive education in the schools, the beginnings of the baby boom and the resulting massive increases in school populations and teacher shortages, and the movement toward the increasing professionalization of teachers.

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, July 15, 1994.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>W.H. Swift, Trends in Canadian Education, (Saskatoon: Quance Lectureship Committee, 1958).

On education and society, he argued that education always seemed to be in a state of flux. This, he maintained, was because schooling "is but one aspect of the total social structure, and the whole itself is constantly in motion, and increasingly so."<sup>16</sup> This approach harkened back to the Gestalt-like strategy evident in his doctoral dissertation so many years before. For Swift, the structure and nature of education changes because the milieu in which the schools operate changes. One of the tasks of the educational planner, he argued, "is to adapt the schools quickly and effectively to changed circumstances and needs."<sup>17</sup> This, once again, reflected Swift's pragmatic approach.

Pertaining to educational theory, Swift once again exhibited a basic distrust of the theoretical in favour of the concrete, a point of view that went back to his earliest days as a School Inspector. He wrote that it had long been a question in his mind "whether educational theory had in fact influenced educational practice nearly as much as is sometimes assumed."<sup>18</sup> It was doubtful, he argued, "that the teacher in the classroom or the administrator in his office, or even the the curriculum committee around the table, has been much concerned about philosophical and theoretical considerations

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 22.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 22.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 33.

when faced with the immediate task in hand."<sup>19</sup>

While conceding the above, the question must then be asked, what leads to change in educational organization or practice? Swift offered the following generalizations. First of all, he contended, "changes in educational practice arise largely out of dissatisfaction with the results of existing procedure."<sup>20</sup> He qualified this with the statement, "this is something worth remembering, and inquiring into, when there is agitation to return to some former practice or arrangement."<sup>21</sup>

It is important to remember that Trends was published in 1958, and, although it was in the process, the Cameron Commission, in whose formation Swift had been involved, would not be published for another year. Therefore, he was writing in the midst of a wave of dissatisfaction in Alberta with the, then current, "progressive" curriculum. As discussed earlier, this was led by a growing "essentialist" movement which advocated a return to the basics of schooling and to the tenets of what they considered sound morality. Swift's writing during this period clearly reflected his frustration, as a senior bureaucrat, with what he might have characterized as ill-informed calls for change, for the sake of change. He illustrated this with the following "provocative"<sup>22</sup> example:

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid. 33-34

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 24.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 24.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid. 24.

the reduction of the teaching of formal grammar as a separate discipline arose from the conviction that for the vast majority of students it did not produce the results in written and oral speech expected of it. Whether other arrangements have had greater success may be open to argument, but a mere going back to something which was not formerly a success is doubtful progress.<sup>23</sup>

In true bureaucratic style, Swift held that "there is rarely to be found an educational practice, actual or proposed, which does not at one and the same time have something to commend it and something to condemn it."<sup>24</sup> Hence, he continued, "any decision is either in the nature of a compromise or in the direction which reflects current emphases, whether pedagogical, political, economic, or even emotional."<sup>25</sup>

This idea was certainly illustrated in Swift's approach to the Atlee case. Even though the correct decision, in terms of the avowed Department policy of the day, might have been to align himself solidly with Medicine Hat School Division No. 4, there were other factors that gave the issue a different hue. The matter had become an emotional one, with public opinion, stirred up by the newspapers' interpretation of events, decidedly in the corner of the Atlee parents. In the end, the moral issues took precedence over the bureaucratic regulations. The Atlee parents, simply stated, had a point.

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 24

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 24

<sup>25</sup>Ibid. 24.



The road upon which their children were to travel was dangerous and the Medicine Hat School Division had not yet completed work which may have calmed their fears. Further, the Division was displaying insensitivity with regard to the parents' needs, inflexibility in the imposition of the regulations and impatience in their heavy handed and threatening attempts to bring the dispute to an end.

Swift's solution was a compromise, blending political expediency, a moral imperative, and a recognition of the regulatory rights of the school division. Atlee might opt out of inclusion in the Division and revert back to District status. This was accompanied, however, with a caution to the Atlee group, that should circumstances change, future inclusion into the District might be more difficult. As things turned out, of course, seven years later, Atlee was eventually absorbed into the Medicine Hat School Division No. 4. This was accomplished voluntarily.<sup>26</sup>

In the end, according to Swift, it is public opinion which finally determines what is done in the schools. In a statement that reflected perfectly his views on his position as a senior civil servant vis a vis the public, he maintained that:

The schools are the public's schools. The people who run them are a combination of the elected and employed servants of the public. The educationists

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<sup>26</sup> Ministerial order from R.H. McKinnon to W.H Swift, April 29, 1965. Cyprus Hills Divisional Correspondence, Calgary-Glenbow Archives.

may make plans and to some extent may implement them with some degree of impunity, but if, in the long run, the plans do not suit the public, they must be changed. Both elected and employed public servants are very conscious of public opinion, the elected ones, perhaps, being a bit more immediately sensitive.<sup>27</sup>

In Trends, Swift outlined numerous philosophical-theoretical educational issues which were prominent at the time the book was written. Reflecting both sides of the progressive - essentialist debate, these included, for example, "a heightened interest, almost hysterical in some quarters, in the formal content of education, especially in mathematics and science."<sup>28</sup> Related to this was "a greater concern for the so-called spiritual values."<sup>29</sup> A survey of his colleagues also revealed a concern for the "sociological aspects of education,"<sup>30</sup> and a worry over an "increased amount of study [regarding] . . . educational problems by laymen."<sup>31</sup> Finally, reflecting the progressive ethos, there were calls for "an increased concern about individual differences."<sup>32</sup>

Relating to teachers Swift argued, in 1958, that "there was, without question, a trend towards bringing teacher training, or teacher education, into closer relationship with

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid. 25.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid. 25.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 25.

the universities, and in doing so to bring into closer association with one another the training of elementary and secondary school teachers."<sup>33</sup> He qualified this by pointing out that "the simplest and at the same time the most definite procedure is that adopted first by Alberta and more recently by British Columbia, in which the existing normal schools, overnight, ceased to be, and found themselves part of the provincial universities."<sup>34</sup> Swift concluded by writing that despite teacher shortages and the consequent delay in reaching some of the desired goals, "there seems little doubt that the prestige of teaching as a profession has been enhanced, and that encouragement has been given to the pursuit of further university education in greater degree than is possible when separation of facilities exists."<sup>35</sup>

One concern for Swift revolved around the issue of more rigid selection of trainees. Reiterating the problem of chronic teacher shortages, particularly in Alberta, Swift concluded that while he thought that "admission standards [had] . . . nowhere been seriously lowered, it [was] still pretty much a case of accepting all nominal qualifiers."<sup>36</sup>

When discussing the area of curriculum and pedagogy, it seemed impossible for Swift to escape the controversy over

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 38.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 38.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 39.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 49.

"progressive education" and the "back to the basics" movement within which his Department was then embroiled. Swift wrote that it appeared to him that, in so far as the influences stemming from the activity program, the child centred-school, learning by doing, and the whole variety of related "progressive" concepts, were concerned, they had made their full impact prior to 1948. He further argued that while opinions on this issue varied, it was his that, at the classroom level, the impact was quite limited. Nevertheless, he cautioned, it was worth bearing in mind that the changes which were advocated, and to which some obeisance was paid, arose from a sense of desire to correct defects in the programs and procedures in the schools. "Peculiarly enough", Swift noted, "they were designed, in part at least, to provide for some of the very things which the schools today are often accused of failing to do."<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, he argued, "the gains, if any, in the mastery of what are termed the fundamentals were scarcely self-evident."<sup>38</sup> He pointed out that the measuring of educational results and the isolation of causes were elusive processes indeed.

What about teacher shortage? What about mobility of population? What about working mothers? What about greater prosperity? What about T.V.? What about changing social attitudes? Perhaps one or more of these factors . . . have really had

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 58-59.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 61.

greater influence than actual teaching procedures.<sup>39</sup>

Overall, during the period, 1948-1958 there had been, according to Swift, "some tendency away from informality and towards return to formality."<sup>40</sup> He speculated that this has been due in part, to a realization that Alberta, at any rate, had "not had a teaching staff of the competence, education, training, and perhaps the energy, to implement what for a time was thought to be the ideal sort of program."<sup>41</sup>

Apparently, according to Swift, the Department of Education had toyed with the idea of having dual programs of study for the elementary school. Leaving no doubt about where he stood with regard to "traditional" education, unprofessional dilettantes, and to the proper role of some married women in the teaching profession, he wrote of the proposed programme that:

One would be for the use of the better teachers, the real professionals, which would give them scope and freedom, and which would bring opportunity without limit to the pupils fortunate enough to be under them. The other would be for the plodders. It would be precise, prescriptive, minimal, unimaginative. It would serve the beginner. It would serve the housewife, now through pressure back in the classroom, who perhaps had been only a mediocre teacher anyway, and who must do the work of her home and care for her family after a tiring day at school.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 61-62.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 62.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 62.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 61.

Whether this had been a serious consideration or not, it was never implemented, its merits outweighed by practical and administrative difficulties. In the end, according to Swift, they found ourselves achieving a compromise between the two: "a bit more prescription, a bit more sequence, a bit more regard for the single or basic textbook,"<sup>43</sup> but with some open spots here and there to give teacher and pupil the opportunity to extend themselves "and to give and receive inspiration beyond the narrow confines of the minimum program."<sup>44</sup>

But what of educational administration and leadership? This was, after all, a vocation to which Swift had dedicated a large part of his career. He was, in fact, a former President of the national body, the Canadian Education Association (CEA), in 1954-55. In Educational Administration in Canada, published in 1970, Swift pointed out that, over a period of less than two decades, educational administration "developed from what was almost entirely a pragmatic vocation to something having many of the characteristics of an academic discipline and a profession."<sup>45</sup>

In what was, for the most part, a testimony to the work of A.W. Reeves, founding Chair of the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Alberta, Swift

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 61-62.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 61-62.

<sup>45</sup>W.H. Swift, Educational Administration in Canada: A Memorial to A.W. Reeves, (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1970), 60.

traced in detail the history and *raison d'être* of the discipline. He wrote that "until the 1950s it was the exception rather than the rule for an administrator, [whether a] . . . principal, inspector, or supervisory officer, to have engaged in any serious study of the role in which he served, or to which he aspired."<sup>46</sup> The administrator achieved promotion or appointment largely by having demonstrated competence as a teacher, or whatever else he might be on the educational ladder. Swift argued that it was assumed "that intelligence, diligence, initiative, and other virtues, having been shown in one sort of situation, would be similarly demonstrated in another, even where the total milieu might be different."<sup>47</sup>

However, somewhat rarely in the 1920s, a bit more in the 30s, and increasingly in the 1940s, "young men and occasionally young women, who had decided to devote their lives to education evidenced a desire to learn more about their profession and to increase their competence in it."<sup>48</sup> During most of this period specialized programs in Canada were limited in scope and appeal. Harkening back to his own experiences, Swift maintained that the educator who wished further training in any ambitious way almost invariably sought admission to the graduate school of education in one of the

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 5.

more prestigious universities of the United States.

An important factor which served to increase the numbers of educators enrolling in these universities in the late 1940s was the availability of rehabilitation grants for demobilized veterans after the Second World War. These were often used for the pursuit of further education. The result, wrote Swift, "was an immediate and obvious increase in the number of persons in possession of master's and doctor's degrees in education."<sup>49</sup>

Swift pointed out that one of the results of this increase was that many teachers, principals, inspectors, and superintendents, who had received graduate training, now found themselves to be members of "an incipient profession or fraternity of wider significance."<sup>50</sup> Given the above, he contended that the appearance, in 1952,<sup>51</sup> of the CEA-Kellogg Project in Educational Leadership was probably the single most important factor for the emergence in Canada of educational administration as a subject of professional study. The Kellogg Foundation provided the funding platform, and thus, the impetus, for many of the projects and much of the research undertaken in the area of educational administration in Canada, as it had done in the United States.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 6-7.



A great deal in the field of educational administration remained pragmatic, wrote Swift in 1970.

Perhaps this will always remain so, because of the nature of the processes being administered and their interrelationship with political structures. But progress towards the goal of still greater conceptualization will surely continue, providing the educational practitioner with an ever increasing body of principles, generalizations, and analyzed data which can be brought to bear on problems as they arise.<sup>53</sup>

### The Archetypal Senior Civil Servant

Swift chose a much different path, early in his career, than contemporaries such as M.E. Lazerte or H.C. Newland. Rather than concentrating on teaching as a vocation, Swift chose, as circumstances and his own talents permitted, the governmental-administrative side of the endeavour. This was reflective of his later emphasis on the practical. He became a school inspector. In the early 1930s, while H.C. Newland and Donald Dickie concentrated on the theoretical aspects of curriculum, perhaps as an aid to social reconstruction,<sup>54</sup> Swift was trying to keep teachers in the field and improve their efficiency and pedagogical skills. No doubt Swift's inclination toward the functional-pragmatic side of education

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 60.

<sup>54</sup>According to R.S. Patterson in the "Canadian Response to Progressive Education", 70, Newland was very much interested in the social reconstructionist ideas of the American educator, George S. Counts. See George S. Counts, Dare the School Build a New Social Order? (New York: John Day Company, 1932).

was created, not only from his rural-small town beginnings, but from his experiences in the hinterland that was the Athabasca territory of the early 1930s. This was a philosophy literally forged on the frontier.

Swift's background in the United Church might also have influenced his life's work. According to Tim Byrne, while there is no such entity as a state church, the United Church, which includes the largest number of protestant adherents, fulfills that de facto role in Canada. This is particularly true in Alberta.<sup>55</sup> It has been so much the case, that one former Deputy Minister drolly referred to the Department of Education as "the United Church at prayer!"<sup>56</sup>

This connection seemed equally true elsewhere as Giles' biography of Samuel John Willis of British Columbia attested:

Willis' credential as a practicing Protestant churchgoer further helped him fit comfortably amongst his fellows in the Department. Churchmen - or rather observant members of various Protestant denominations - were well represented in the provincial educational bureaucracy around the time of Willis' appointment in 1919.<sup>57</sup>

Willis had been raised a Methodist, eventually belonging to the United Church after the 1925 amalgamation.

According to Benjamin Smillie, Church affiliation, particularly in the major Protestant denominations, was no

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<sup>55</sup>T.C. Byrne, Alberta's Revolutionary Leaders, (Calgary: Detselig, 1991), 220.

<sup>56</sup>As quoted by Robert Carney. Personal interview, May 17, 1996.

<sup>57</sup>Giles, 5-6.

accident amongst educators. The reform spirit was strong within both the church and the educational bureaucracy. Their ultimate goal of making a better society was a shared one. The social gospel movement evident at the turn of the century and lasting into the 1930s in Europe and North America was described by Smillie as a means of applying the Christian gospel to life. He saw it as a movement "optimistic about the reconstruction of society based on democratic Christian principles."<sup>58</sup> It assumed that religious and secular thought was involved in an interdependent relationship.

According to Byrne, it was the United Church's requirement that theological students be university trained, which led "to modernist views on the part of the clergy."<sup>59</sup> It would be inevitable, of course, that these views would be shared by many in the congregation. Thus, it might be in keeping with a more "modern" liberal theological doctrine that Swift could refer to ". . . various characters in the Bible, and particularly Christ, as examples of persons who did a 'good thing', the 'right thing', . . . who did something for their fellow man."<sup>60</sup>

Byrne pointed out that Protestant denominations such as the Anglican and the United Church "have not only shaped

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<sup>58</sup>Benjamin G. Smillie, "The Social Gospel in Canada: A Theological Critique", in Richard Allen, ed., The Social Gospel in Canada (Regina: University of Regina, 1975), 318.

<sup>59</sup>Byrne, 220.

<sup>60</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 17, 1994.

society; they have also been influenced, over time, by various social forces."<sup>61</sup> They were also closely associated with the middle and upper classes. Byrne held that "as with membership in the Rotary Club, an identification with either of these religious organizations carries with it a badge of respectability."<sup>62</sup> As noted earlier, not only was Swift a staunch member of the United Church, but he was an enthusiastic Rotarian, in later years, involved in its leadership.

Bob Carney, a former Deputy Minister and educational historian, in an interview in 1996, discussed the connection between religion, the behavior of senior government officials, and W.H. Swift. Of Swift's United Church background, Carney pointed out that one distinction would have been the idea of the separation of church and state. This was an attitude Swift would have been quite at home with. Carney argued that the attitude was really more a part of the Methodist tradition, which would have been absorbed into the United Church's point of view. Along these lines, he suggested that:

You just have to look at a person like Egerton Ryerson. Once he became an administrator, [he] was apolitical, he was of Methodist background somewhat tempered by the fact that his family was from the established church [Anglican]. So I think that's part of the [idea]. A good administrator of a public school system, is, at least until Swift's time, . . . [within] an institutional climate where you said, `my

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<sup>61</sup>Byrne, 221.

<sup>62</sup>Byrne, 221.

religion is really a private matter. I'm serving all the people, and I must serve them well and surely. So I'm going to watch that my religious interests, whatever they are, don't start coming into play'. Christian beliefs, that's fine, because that is generally held. . . . That would be a tradition and Swift [was] part of that tradition. . . . Tried to be fair, tried to be open, and like Ryerson before him, back in the 19th century, said 'look, we've got separate schools, were going to have to look after them, but eventually, they'll see the light, be patient!' That was in the name of peace and harmony and to get on with the bigger picture. That, to my mind, would have been Swift's point of view, given his religious background.<sup>63</sup>

When asked what role, if any, religious affiliation played in decision making at the administrative level Swift replied that during the time that he was Chief Inspector of Schools and Deputy Minister, "no attention, whatsoever, was paid to the church connection of the people that were in prospect [sic]."<sup>64</sup> The only exception to this, that he could recall, was when it became necessary to appoint an inspector or a superintendent to St. Paul or to Bonnyville.

We thought it desirable to have somebody who could speak French. Usually the people who spoke French that we would be interested in would also be Roman Catholic. But this matter of religion played no part in it otherwise.<sup>65</sup>

While on the general topic of the role of religion in the

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<sup>63</sup>As quoted by Robert Carney. Personal interview, May 17, 1996.

<sup>64</sup>Personal interview with W.H.Swift, June 17, 1994.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

administration of public education in the Province, Swift related the following anecdote:

Frank Buchanan was Superintendent of Public Schools in Calgary. He came to my office at the time I was Deputy Minister, and said, 'in a year's time, I'll be retiring. The School Board wants to appoint an Assistant Superintendent', they didn't have one at that time, 'with the expectation that the Assistant Superintendent will become Superintendent when I retire. I'm wondering if there are any people whose names you'd like to put forward.' I said immediately, 'I think you should look at Bob Warren'. Bob was about my own age, and he was one of our High School Inspectors and I regarded him highly. So we discussed Warren and his background and so on. Then came the final question from Buchanan, he said, 'is he a good churchman?' I said, 'well, I don't know whether Bob is a good churchman or not, but I do know that his wife played the organ in church at Killam!' 'That's good enough' Buchanan said. Bob was appointed!<sup>66</sup>

Was there a connection between Swift and the "official attitude" of the archetypal British senior civil servant? The evidence shows that there can be a reasonable argument made that he might have represented an example of this nineteenth century imperial "tradition." He represented continuity, both in his core values and beliefs, and in his eager acceptance, at a relatively young age, of the bureaucratic ethos.

Great Britain, of course, had a profound influence on the management of education in Alberta, particularly in terms of

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

bureaucratic and civic styles. The British Civil Service traditions were transplanted to Canada through the Foreign Office and diplomatic service in Canada as a colony and later as a member nation in the British Commonwealth. By the late nineteenth century, a British-style bureaucracy was well in place.<sup>67</sup>

Much of the distinctiveness of the British Civil Service derived from the recommendations of the Report on the Organization of the Permanent Civil Service of 1854.<sup>68</sup> Its recommendations were enacted into legislation by the British Parliament in 1855.<sup>69</sup> The acceptance of the report is thought to have marked the beginning of the civil service in Britain.<sup>70</sup>

The report recommended recruitment by open competition and examination, a division between intellectual and routine clerical tasks, and incremented salaries and opportunities through the ranks. The ideal civil service was conceived as a body of university-trained men, schooled in analytical thinking, who had "an inner determination to find out the right answer at all costs", who were not swayed by personal prejudices and who were non-political and thus "able to serve

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<sup>67</sup>Giles, 41.

<sup>68</sup>This was known as the Northcote-Trevelyan Report, published in 1854. Richard A. Chapman, The Higher Civil Service in Britain, (London: Constable & Co., 1970), 32.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 32.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 21.

Government of all parties with equal loyalty and obtain their confidence."<sup>71</sup> The personal qualities of candidates were also regarded in determining their fitness for appointment. According to Kesall, the administrative class "have often been praised for their incorruptibility; their willingness to subordinate personal interest to that of the Service, their loyalty to Ministers, their conscientiousness and industry, their tact, personal charm and literary facility."<sup>72</sup> All of these priveleges, according to Giles, pertained to the privileges of middle-class upbringing and British public school education. Already established world-wide as leaders in bureaucratic management, these British notions of public accountability, together with modern principles of scientific management, were applied to Canadian schools. It was natural then, that early educationists in Alberta would adopt a management model based on imperial traditions of public service.<sup>73</sup> As an aid to understanding, the nineteenth century model as represented in the work of Henry Taylor in his handbook for the British senior civil servant, The Statesman, might be utilized as a benchmark.

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<sup>71</sup>Giles, 42.

<sup>72</sup>R.K. Kelsall, "The Social Background of the Higher Civil Service" in William A. Robinson, ed. The Civil Service in Britain and France, as quoted in Giles "The Career of Samuel John Willis", 43.

<sup>73</sup>Giles, 43.



Swift was a self-described pragmatist;<sup>74</sup> he called it his "non-philosophy." This was the ideal criterion for the civil servant according to Taylor's nineteenth century manual, as it is not overtly philosophical in nature. According to Taylor:

If he be a man of philosophic mind, philosophy will enter into his views and enlarge and enlighten them; but it will be well that it not manifest itself in his writing, because he has to address himself, not to philosophers but to ordinary men . . . . A statesman's philosophy, therefore, should be . . . as foundations sunk in the ground, and should not overtly appear, except in so far as it may be made to take the form of trite and popular maxims.<sup>75</sup>

Like his predecessor, McNally, Swift was able to set aside idealism to focus on the concrete in order to put policy into action, often in face to face encounters with the public. Witness the comments alluded to earlier with regard to the establishment of the University of Lethbridge. "Within the severe constraints imposed by the government's lack of definition of the institutional transformation, Swift offered sound advice, attempted to anticipate trouble, and discharged efficiently those functions exclusively within the

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<sup>74</sup>It is not the author's belief that Swift thought of himself as a pragmatist in the Deweyan sense. That is he did not think of pragmatism as being tied to progressive philosophy. Rather, it is the writer's opinion that Swift saw himself as a pragmatist in the sense that through the careful consideration of available information a decision might be derived. The answers, for Swift, did not appear as a flash of inspiration.

<sup>75</sup>Taylor, 41.

commission's domain."<sup>76</sup>

The imposition by Swift of a sense of order throughout the working day, of the strict separation between work and home, these were all vestiges of a bygone era. Taylor appealed for calm in the world of the nineteenth century statesman:

Thus, he should never suffer himself to write in a hurried hand, but make a point of writing neatly and clearly whatever may be his haste, which practice will of itself secure to him some degree of patience and composure. The arrangement, tying up, and docketing of such papers as are before him, . . . he should undertake himself. . . . Nor let him suppose that this time is thrown away on these light operations, but rather consider them as needful intermissions of labour; for to an active mind under high pressure there is hardly any rest by day.<sup>77</sup>

By the increasingly complex world of the mid-1960s, however, this sort of separation of work and personal life, for a senior civil servant, would have been difficult, and, in today's world of personal computers and cellular telephones, impossible. An example of the time commitment some, more contemporary, Deputy Ministers might have been asked for, was that imposed upon Bob Carney, former Deputy Minister to Al Adair in the Alberta Department of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife, 1974-1976. Carney recalled that he:

. . . was always available. Which was a real problem. He didn't take advantage of me because he was available to his people all the time. His wife lived in Peace River, she had a job.

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<sup>76</sup>Holmes, 58.

<sup>77</sup>Taylor, 78-79.

He used to go home whenever he could on the weekends, and so he [would say] . . . , you know, 'Come and have dinner with me, Bob, we'll go to a movie or something'! So he liked that kind of a relationship. I used to have breakfast with him just about every morning to start our day. So in every context, the Ministers . . . looked for someone who worked according to their schedule. In other words, everything had to be done by 4:30, normally. I would be going to see Al, up the steps of the Legislature, and Don Getty, [then a cabinet minister], would be coming down the stairs almost every day on my way up. He's finished for the day! So his Deputy is not going to have to be there. . . . I didn't bring much home, because I didn't<sup>78</sup> go home! That was according to his schedule.

In Taylor's world of nineteenth century British government, the statesman was a political entity, obtaining rank and losing it according to the fancy of the British electorate, limited though the franchise then was. On the other hand, the senior civil servant in the twentieth century Canadian context had to be, theoretically, apolitical. He or she serves the best interests of the public, not the political party, although in the case of Alberta, as noted earlier, the extent to which this was the case depended on the Department. One in this position cannot afford to take a strong stance on issues. One must take on the role of the "impartial umpire" as far as possible without jeopardising the interests of those who are your immediate superiors, in Swift's case, the Minister of Education.

According to Taylor, the ideal civil servant might have the following traits: one who is in no way radical, either in

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<sup>78</sup>Personal interview with Bob Carney, May 17, 1996.

philosophy, politics or manner; an industrious and efficient worker who is capable of making relatively quick, but informed, well thought out, decisions; one who is able to make productive use of the expertise around him.<sup>79</sup> Bill Swift, by the time of his arrival as Deputy Minister of Education, matched these criteria. To these must also be added his intimate knowledge of all aspects of the educational process, and his strong background in administration. It has been demonstrated that he displayed these traits early in his career. Such criteria might also be applied to his predecessor G.F. McNally as well.

The template does not fit so well in the case of H.C. Newland. Newland had strong philosophical and ideological ideals. He was an ardent socialist and a staunch advocate of progressive education. These were attitudes that may have alienated him from the upper echelons of power, most notably from McNally and the Minister, Ansley. Swift indicated that Newland's inflexible approach to progressive reforms within the curriculum was not all that popular among some educational administrators. As noted earlier, he also pointed out that there had been difficulties implementing some of these ideas. This was particularly evident in his discussions regarding the the Normal Schools. In fact, Swift would agree with R.S. Patterson's thesis which questioned whether or not the so-

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<sup>79</sup>See Taylor, Chapters. III, VI, XII, XIV, and XVI, in which there is general discussion of these traits.

called "progressive" reforms ever truly took hold at all at the grass roots level of the classroom in Alberta.<sup>80</sup>

Swift may have been among the last of a breed in terms of those nineteenth century traits. Even by his last years in office, there is evidence that the position was becoming a more complex one. As the educational bureaucracy grew in the province, the position required, more and more often, the delegation of tasks formerly performed by the Deputy Minister. Still, Swift's talent for facilitation and administration allowed him to flourish even within this increasingly complex bureaucratic milieu.

#### The Exemplar of Virtue

According to David Hart, a good and free society cannot exist without visible exemplars who exhibit moral courage, fidelity and trustworthiness.<sup>81</sup> He went on to argue that the desire for exemplars "is not a passing fancy or a lingering need of childhood. It is an absolutely essential characteristic of democratic government."<sup>82</sup> Hart pointed out that today, too many management theorists and practitioners

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<sup>80</sup>R.S. Patterson, "The Implementation of Progressive Education in Canada", in Nick Kach et.al., Essays on Canadian Education, (Calgary: Detselig, 1986), 93.

<sup>81</sup>David K. Hart, "The Moral Exemplar in an Organizational Society", in Terry L. Cooper and N. Dale Wright, eds., Exemplary Public Administrators: Character and Leadership in Government, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1992), 10.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 11.

have argued that because modern organizations are so complex, it is naive to expect them to be significantly influenced by morally exemplary men and women. Rather, they argue, we must put our trust in the superiority of "ethical structures - an epic oxymoron - which relieves us of the need to trust supposedly limited human moral capacities."<sup>83</sup> The contemporary orthodoxy assumes that well-designed structures will produce ethical people. Hart found no evidence for this belief.<sup>84</sup>

Hart argued that America began to lose touch with her exemplars after the Second World War with the rise and dominance of the vast, complex modern organizations that "washed the colors [sic] of individual accomplishment into a muddy grey background of collective behavior."<sup>85</sup> This could easily be extended to post-war Canadian society. Specifically, might this scenario be applied to Alberta's Department of Education as it expanded throughout the 1960s and beyond? As noted earlier, Swift pointed out that, prior to the "professionalization" of educational administration beginning in the 1950s, strong character traits such as intelligence, diligence, initiative, and other virtues, were given much more significance when choosing the right person

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 14.

for higher administrative positions in the civil service.<sup>86</sup> If so, Swift might be viewed as among the last of the self-made moral exemplars - someone to whom subordinates in the Department could look up to, as Swift did with his predecessor, McNally, to provide leadership and continuity based upon "hands-on" experience, who could be counted on to make the "right" decision. After Swift and particularly, after Byrne, the Department may have become too large for one man to lead by example.

The testimony of history is clear, wrote Hart, that a free people must have moral exemplars. They give confidence in public leadership, they serve as moral guides, and they provide a necessary encouragement for individual moral development. When formal ethics intertwines with the lives of the exemplars, it gives substance to moral aspiration. Hart quoted P.H. Nowell-Smith:

Suppose someone were to ask me to give him a moral code to live by, I should reply - as Aristotle in effect did - 'I can't give you a code; go and watch the best and wisest men you can find and imitate them.' I should not have given him what he asked for; but I should have given him the sort of help that a moral philosopher can give. If I went on to give the reasons for this advice, I should help him by explaining that he has put his question in the wrong way. What he really wanted was practical knowledge; he wanted to know how to live.<sup>87</sup>

Dealing with morality and character, another proposition

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<sup>86</sup>W.H. Swift, Educational Administration in Canada, 5.

<sup>87</sup>P.H. Nowell-Smith, Ethics, (New York, Viking Penguin, 1954), 19-20.

stated:

Morality can never be advanced by law or by force. It is a personal and free will matter and must be disseminated by the contagion of the contact of morally fragrant personalities with those who are less morally responsible but who are also in some measure desirous of doing the creator's will.<sup>88</sup>

If one accepts that moral exemplars are important, then the characteristics that distinguish them must be identified. According to Hart, there are four categories. First, good moral character must be a constant aspect of the personality of the exemplar; it is not a sometime thing. Second, the exemplar must act intentionally and freely: there can be no compulsion involved. Third, the exemplar must be relatively faultless; he or she need not be perfect in all things but must always strive for virtue in most things. Finally, the actions of the exemplar must bring about real good, even in failure: one's moral actions must never be frivolous. In some instances, the example counts for more than the substantial success.<sup>89</sup> Historian and educator David Jones offered the following advice in this regard:

Administrators, in choosing a colleague or teacher, always remember that the character of the person is worth ten times what he or she knows.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>From The Urantia Book, (Chicago: Urantia Foundation, 1981). As quoted in David C. Jones ed., The Spirit of Teaching Excellence, (Calgary: Detselig, 1995), ix.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>90</sup>David C. Jones ed., Sayings For Teachers, (Calgary: Detselig, 1997), 39.



A reasonable case might be made that Bill Swift fulfilled the first prerequisite. If we acknowledge that "good moral character" would be a precondition for constant and rapid promotion through the ranks of the Department of Education, a rise which culminated in Swift's appointment to the highest civil service position the Department had to offer, the Deputy Ministership, then we must assume that Swift's good character was a consistent trait.

The documentary evidence provided thus far does not contradict this, nor do the comments made by those who knew him, however biased they might be. For example, R.H. McKinnon, his last Minister of Education described him as "a highly ethical and trustworthy man".<sup>91</sup> His son Glenn described him as "very honest, and genuine."<sup>92</sup> Another former civil servant and educational historian, Bob Carney described Swift as "tolerant" and "respectful."<sup>93</sup>

Swift was not compelled to make certain decisions other than by the circumstances of the moment. Although a case can be made that he was bound by such regulations as The School Act, Department policy and tradition, no compulsion toward a particular decision is evident. Though job security might have been a factor earlier in his career, by the time Swift became Deputy Minister, he was the Department of Education.

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<sup>91</sup>Personal interview with R.H. McKinnon, January 26, 1998.

<sup>92</sup>Personal interview with Glen Swift, January 22, 1998.

<sup>93</sup>Personal interview with Robert Carney, May 17, 1996.

Further, an individual with his educational background, standing in the community, reputation, and experience, would have no shortage of employment prospects. Therefore, the second criterion seems fulfilled.

As for the third standard, who can be truly faultless? Although Swift's career did seem to progress relatively "smoothly", to use his expression, he did experience a few ups and downs. According to his son Glenn:

Well for the most part things did go pretty well. However, one thing that I remember, was an incident concerning the property we had at Baptiste Lake. This concerned his purchase of an adjacent lot. However, it wasn't long before the neighbors produced a document claiming ownership of this land. Well, the resulting legal wrangling made life miserable for him for a while. And he said that he `wished he'd never bothered with the deal'[sic].<sup>94</sup>

Another case Glenn Swift recalled concerned an incident where:

[Swift] . . . was interviewed about a school treasurer who had been allegedly caught with his hands in the till. The way Dad was quoted sounded like he was under the impression that this individual had already been convicted of the crime. Well as it turned out the person was exonerated and there were threats of legal action. This bothered my father, even though the threats never materialized after apologies were given. This would have been in the early 1950's.<sup>95</sup>

Lives are rarely lived without some anxieties brought on by circumstances, as perhaps in these examples, out of the control of the historical actor. For all that, it can be reasonably argued that Bill Swift did strive for virtue in

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<sup>94</sup>Personal interview with Glen Swift, January 22, 1998.

<sup>95</sup>Personal interview with Glen Swift, January 22, 1998.

most things.

Finally, it cannot be denied that Swift's actions did bring about real good in terms of public education in the Province of Alberta. The previous chapters have offered numerous examples of Swift's achievements throughout his career. However, some tasks Swift embarked upon were, in a sense, never-ending. When asked whether there was any overarching goal he had hoped to achieve during his tenure as Deputy Minister, Swift replied that he had wanted to "further develop the possibility of more and more children, young people, getting a High School education."<sup>96</sup> He pointed out that he:

wanted them to have an opportunity to have a diversified secondary education appropriate to their particular abilities and interests. Because, when I became Dep. Minister, and I don't find fault with anybody for this, the academic program in the high school was pretty much what we had . . . . [sic] Perhaps I should go back to when I was Inspector of Schools. We had very few High Schools teaching to grade 12 even. And one of my objectives, one of my hopes, was that more and more young people could get into High School and get into High School programs which were appropriate to their interests and abilities [sic]. Which they have! That gradually came about, it didn't come about because of me, it came about because of people's efforts on School Boards, teachers, parents.[sic] All sorts of people were beginning to realize that in order to get anywhere in life, young people had to have more education. And a more varied education [sic]. When I became Deputy Minister, certainly when I became an Inspector of Schools, the vast majority of our children were still farm children. They intended to be farmers. And they knew their parents would do little or nothing about 'scientific agriculture'. Like good

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<sup>96</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, May 19, 1996.

farmers. But gradually, as society became more and more complex, there were more things that young people had to learn or could profitably learn [sic]. . . . So there developed the Composite High School which was one of the factors prominent in the development of the school divisions which were then able to coordinate some of these things. Plus it became popular to come into the High Schools, and so on. So I think that was probably my chief goal, the thing that I most wanted to see happen. The broadening of High School opportunities and the increased numbers of young people who were able to take advantage of it.<sup>97</sup>

The qualities of good character, according to Hart, transcend time and place. Most moral problems, he continued, will yield to such classic virtues as courage, magnanimity, and prudence.<sup>98</sup> In chapter II, this biography dealt with aspects of Swift's early education which might have formed the foundation upon which certain aspects of his unique personality may have been built. It was argued that the ideology of Swift's public schooling was inlaid in the curriculum and revolved around three general themes: an orderly and harmonious Canadian society; a belief in material and spiritual progress; and, an emphasis on the membership of Canadians in the British Empire."<sup>99</sup> These three ideas, according to von Heyking, came together as a common theme in the curriculum of the period: "education for good character."<sup>100</sup> The understanding of good character was, in

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

<sup>98</sup>Hart, 15.

<sup>99</sup>von Heyking, 51.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., 51

turn, influenced by the tenets of philosophic idealism which saw service to others as the highest virtue and the best expression of Christian principles. According to von Heyking: "Educators of the period 1905 -1920 believed that preparing students for such service to the community was the key to continued social improvement."<sup>101</sup> That being said, are there other aspects of the educational endeavor which might be listed under the rubric "good character?" According to Jones, other keystones might include: unselfishness; respect for oneself and others; spirituality; trustworthiness; and sincerity.<sup>102</sup> It is evident that Bill Swift did not work for personal aggrandizement, but worked for the public good, he was intensely loyal to his Minister and the Department, and thoroughly trustworthy. According to McKinnon:

As far as his relationship with the Minister, he never ever decided that he was the Minister [sic]. I would have hundreds of questions for him. I had daily questions for him about one thing or another. I'd get into my office about 7 a.m. and I'd write memos to him about this or that. I learned how to write a good letter myself by following what he had to say. He would always begin, "Re: the following subject, I have the following observations and comments to make . . . . That left it totally in the hands of the Minister. Always well organized, if you do this such and such will happen, if this, such and such. Of course much of that stuff had to go to Cabinet, it wasn't totally a Ministerial decision. But it was always set up so well that I was so sure that everything had been looked after down below that when I went to cabinet they wouldn't say "well, did you look at this angle or

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 51.

<sup>102</sup>David C. Jones, The Spirit of Teaching Excellence, ix-x.

that angle?"[sic] Swift was known for that thoroughness. I was always sure that I knew what he knew surrounding that particular subject. His observations and comments were always absolutely marvelous as far as I was concerned. They were meticulously thought out and written.<sup>103</sup>

Hart wrote that, because not all moral actions are equivalent, it is necessary to devise a framework that will allow a categorization of the various forms of example. The tendency exists, he argued, "to concentrate on dramatic times and heroic actions, citing them as the paradigmatic examples for all."<sup>104</sup> However, without minimizing these, it is important to note that if people are to live worthy lives, then morality must be more than episodic and dependent upon dramatic events. To have meaning, Hart argued, morality must be an intentional aspect of the routines of daily life. "Although we should learn from and be inspired by the moral hero, we have more to gain from emulating the moral worker."<sup>105</sup>

It is argued here that Swift fits well into the latter category. For it is through an evaluation of Swift's life work as an educator and administrator that his status as an exemplar is best judged.

It is, at times, difficult to assess Swift's personality because, apparently, the public persona seems the same as the

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<sup>103</sup>Personal interview with R.H. McKinnon, January 26, 1998.

<sup>104</sup>Hart, 21.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., 21.

private one.<sup>106</sup> There is a consistency, for example, between the comments made by McKinnon and Glenn Swift. Bill Swift always stood at a distance. This was true also in his private life. For example, in his work for the United Church - this was a separate, not a family orientation. He remained aloof from personal relationships in his public and family life.

According to McKinnon:

I can remember Tim Byrne and I would always make time at the end of a day of meetings when we would be at conventions or such and have a drink to relax. Bill would never do that. And if he did, you always got the impression that he was doing it just to please you.<sup>107</sup>

Glenn Swift recalled that this separation extended to his family life as well. When asked if he was an easy man to talk to, as a child, Swift replied:

Not very. We actually didn't talk very much at all. What we did though, was do things together. He was very good at carpentry, so I learned an awful lot about that.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup>I am referring here to the Jungian concept of the persona or public mask. The persona archetype is the mask or facade one exhibits publicly. Calvin S. Hall and Vernon J. Norlby, A Primer of Jungian Psychology, (New York: New American Library, 1973), 44.

<sup>107</sup>Personal interview with R.H. McKinnon, January 26, 1998.

<sup>108</sup>Personal interview with Glen Swift, January 22, 1998.

He further qualified this by adding:

Dad may have appeared to many people to be quite formal and one might get the impression that he had no sense of humour. But. . . he said to me once, 'you know Glenn, I've had lots of acquaintances, but no friends. No people that I could really call friends.'[sic] I think that that is very telling. In other words if he was feeling very badly about something emotionally, he had nobody to talk to.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup>Ibid.



## CHAPTER VIII CONCLUSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

At the outset of this dissertation the writer set out to determine the answers to two main questions: 1. What was the nature and extent of W.H. Swift's involvement with public education in the Province of Alberta between 1925 and 1966? 2. Given the importance of the positions he held, what was his involvement in and influence upon the educational changes which took place during this period?

It has been demonstrated that W.H. Swift had a varied career covering nearly every facet of the educational endeavour possible in the Province. Swift's professional career spanned over six decades covering work as a teacher and educator of teachers, school inspector, author, educational administrator, and eventually, public servant, as Deputy Minister of Education for the Province. He was a major catalyst in the implementation of many of the major changes in educational philosophy, policy and curriculum in Alberta.

It was, the evidence has indicated, his acumen as an administrator extraordinaire and facilitator that often turned theory into reality. Examples have been presented throughout this dissertation. One might examine, for instance, his efforts as Principal of the Calgary Normal School in modifying the theoretical ideas inherent in the new "progressive" curriculum instituted by the Social Credit Government in the mid-1930s. This resulted in a more practical application of the progressively influenced "enterprise" in terms of both

teacher training and in the classroom. Another example was his work as Chief Inspector of Schools and later, Deputy Minister of Education, in dealing with the exigencies necessary during the wartime teacher shortages. His calming influence on the sometimes volatile discussions which surrounded the creation of the Universities of Calgary and Lethbridge were also a testament to his skills as an administrator, public servant, and facilitator.

Swift witnessed, and was involved in, the gradual shift from that symbol of the prairie frontier, the one-room-schoolhouse to the massive expansion of educational facilities in the economic boom of the 1960s. It was his experience and ability to understand the human impact of such changes that influenced his delicate handling of one of the most notorious of those school closure debates, the Atlee versus Medicine Hat School Division No. 4 issue, which took place between 1958 and 1965. His harmonization, along with that of his Minister, R.H. McKinnon, of federal and provincial funding for vocational education led to a massive expansion of such facilities, both at the composite high school level and the college level. Swift observed, and in some cases, oversaw, a drastic change in the way teacher training was carried out in the province. This began with the normal schools and their often utilitarian approach, governed by chronic teacher shortages and economic necessity, and ended with the "professionalization" of the vocation at the university level.

One theme which reappeared throughout Swift's career seemed to be the obvious and frequent recognition, by his superiors, of his talent for administrative work; for his meticulous attention to detail. This is what he enjoyed about his work, creating order out of sometimes chaotic situations. He was also admired for his sense of urgency, and for his ability to discern and separate from the trivial that which was most significant.

Of course this is not to imply that Swift simply left his career to fate and the right connections. His academic performance at the University of Alberta and at Stanford attest not only to his intellect, but also to his ambition. Further, like many career civil servants, he was not above employing a modicum of real politic to maintain his standing, as some of the correspondence with superiors such as H.C. Newland and Fred McNally indicated.

Chapter II examined Swift's family background, following their migration from central Canada to Edmonton, in what was eventually to be the new Province of Alberta. Swift's early school years were surveyed leading up to his undergraduate days at the University of Alberta and finally his teacher training at the Calgary Normal School.

It is clear that Swift's early family, religious and school experiences would leave an indelible mark on his future attitudes as a senior bureaucrat. His family's Eastern Township, British mercantile roots and entrepreneurial

propensity provided Swift with the necessary attitudes which would allow him to make his own opportunities in the new educational bureaucracy of the Province of Alberta. As well, watching his father carry on business amid the rustic values of the small town of Tofield would have prepared him for his future dealings with a primarily rural public school system. Further, it might have given him insight into the problems inherent with the educational endeavour in the hinterland, in terms of the students, the parents and/or administrators, and finally, the teachers themselves. These neophyte teachers, often thrust into this sometimes harsh environment, with little preparation and only infrequent visits of the school inspector, were the most recurrent subjects of Swift's attention as he rose through the hierarchy of the provincial educational bureaucracy .

Swift's United Church background might have given his later pragmatic approach to life strong support, as well as the tacit endorsement of his desire for higher education. It may have also given him the tolerant, more liberal attitudes necessary to allow him to adapt to the often, more dogmatic views of his future superiors in the Department of Education. As well, his earlier experiences in public speaking and parliamentary procedure through the church-sponsored "tuxis parliament," and his later involvement in church management, on a local level, could do little but help him in his future endeavour.

Although, in general, Swift could be said to have broad-minded attitudes to many aspects of life, there was also a distinct strain of conservatism which permeated his attitude toward education. This involved, not a resistance to change per se, but a more cautious opposition to the idea of change for change's sake. This was illustrated by his scepticism regarding some of the modifications to the existing Alberta curriculum instituted by progressives, beginning in the mid-1930s. Swift had an almost utilitarian, rural-based practicality about him, influenced, no doubt, by his observations as a school inspector in the Athabasca Territory of the Depression era.

As a public school student, Swift was unquestionably talented, winning numerous awards and graduating early from high school. His early schooling, imbued with British imperialism, no doubt influenced his attitudes toward morality, fair play, progress and public service. However, it was within the university milieu that his future role in the community, and his public persona, really began to emerge. Swift, from the outset, was a "joiner." He enjoyed facing the public. He was a keen participant in such things as student affairs, he became a member of the students' council taking on the role of Chairman of the House Committee, a student self-discipline body, he sang in choirs, and took part in several plays.

The University of Alberta was a small place at the time

Swift attended, with an enrolment of roughly only a thousand students. It was here, and later, in the normal school environment, that Swift would begin to make the personal connections with both students and staff that would eventually allow him access to the educational hierarchy.

A university degree in the Alberta of the 1920s was a valuable commodity, and Swift, being one of the few teachers to possess one, learned its value early on. With less than two years teaching experience, he was plucked from the field, installed as an instructor in the Olds School of Agriculture, and, by 1930, introduced to the provincial inspectorate.

Chapter three examined the period 1930 -1935. These years spent overseeing the Athabasca School District firmly validated Swift's credentials as a star on the rise. In the throws of one of history's worst economic depressions, Swift had become one of the province's educated elite, by now possessing a graduate degree. However, his path as administrator and civil servant, as opposed to academician, had now also been established. It was also during this period that Bill Swift met, courted and married Mary King, his lifelong companion.

Given his circumstances of rising prominence, and his secure position with the Department of Education, the Swift family managed a relatively comfortable lifestyle during the Depression years. Swift's experiences as a school inspector during this period, however, certainly heightened his

awareness of the problems faced by teachers and their employers. The inspectorate also increased his understanding of the relationship between school districts and the Provincial Government, in terms of grants and capital expenditures. This experience would be invaluable to Swift as his responsibilities increased.

Chapter IV surveyed Swift's career as an instructor in the Camrose Normal School, beginning in 1935, his graduate school experiences at Stanford University, and the principalship at the Calgary Normal School. The chapter concluded with Swift's appointment as Chief Inspector of Schools in 1942. The unit also revealed Swift's maturation from neophyte teacher through educational administrator to senior bureaucrat in just fourteen years.

After the isolation and the long separations from his family which had become the norm in the Athabasca territory. Swift thrived in the collegial environment at Camrose. The friendly atmosphere between the staff and the student body in the academic milieu and the regular schedule of Normal School life suited both Bill and Mary Swift. Two years later, however, Swift was once again drawn to improve his prospects through higher education and decided to attend Stanford University in order to obtain his doctorate. After fulfilling his obligations at Stanford, Swift then resumed his upwardly mobile career with the Department of Education, eventually completing the dissertation in 1942.

Two issues stand out in the Stanford scenario. The first revolved around Swift's relationship with the Department of Education. An analysis of the correspondence at the time showed that Swift anticipated the problems that may arise with his request for leave of absence. In a cleverly crafted letter to H.C. Newland in January of 1937, he outlined these, and, at the same time, proposed a way in which his leave could be justified. Newland was, in fact, an enthusiastic supporter of Swift's doctoral endeavour and tried, unsuccessfully, to get him a further three months paid leave. Other correspondence between the two consisted largely of Swift requesting, at times, rather trite information of Newland, such as who might be the best person to study with and whether or not an Ed.D might be better than a Ph.D. Clearly, for Swift, this was a way of keeping lines of communication open while he was away. It also left no doubt as to who was in the subordinate position. These early examples were evidence of Swift's clear understanding of the workings of the educational bureaucracy in the Province and the methods by which it could be manipulated in order to meet a particular set of goals. These "goals" need not be personal ones. Swift was undoubtedly able to use this kind of experience later in his career as Deputy Minister of Education.

The second issue arising out of the Stanford experience pertains to Swift's own evaluation of it. As he related various anecdotes about the period, they all leave one with



the impression that Swift was more interested in the anticipated credential than in the academic experience. His evaluation of the eventual dissertation is also telling in this regard. "When it [the dissertation] was eventually completed and summarized in a Stanford publication it created no stir in academic quarters." Although the thesis was not ground-breaking and really did not reflect much of Swift's future work, it was a competent study in an area of psychology, gestalt, that was considered "cutting-edge" at the time.

Two diametrically opposed interpretations might be offered here. One would be that Swift simply went through the motions and completed the degree in the shortest possible time. Stanford's program consisted of one year plus a summer term as opposed to, for example, the University of Toronto's, rejected by Swift, which required two full years. Other factors came into this decision, however, including leave of absence and income.

The second explanation which, given the way his career had played out up to that point, revolves around the idea that Swift did the best he could under circumstances which did not have a great deal of relevance to his career aspirations in the senior civil service. That he simply "put in time" does not fit Swift's personality nor does it apparently fit the facts, since the Dean of his Department thought enough of his performance to inquire whether or not he would be interested

in accepting a post at Stanford. Given his background of academic excellence and the work ethic Swift had thus far displayed, the second seems the most reasonable interpretation.

Upon his return, Swift resumed his career, this time, at the Edmonton Normal School and was eventually appointed Director of the Department of Education Summer School. Two years later, Swift became Principal of the Calgary Normal School. He was, at that time, the youngest and the most junior of the entire Normal School staff, Edmonton and Calgary, and found himself now presiding over many of his former mentors. Swift, for the first time in his career, was an administrator.

The position at Calgary would provide invaluable experience. Swift was left to run the school as he saw fit. The job gave him hands-on experience at every level of teacher training, from curriculum and pedagogy to the placement of teachers in the field; from the administration and leadership of a talented and professional staff, to the more mundane aspects of bookkeeping and budget balancing. Add to this, the exigencies of wartime, the acute teacher shortage, and the temporary quarters in which the school was then housed, and it is easy to see why, when the position of Chief Inspector of Schools came vacant, Swift's name was at the top of the list. It also did no harm that Swift was on very amicable terms with the Deputy Minister, Fred McNally, as correspondence from that

period indicated.

For Swift, this represented the final step in his apprenticeship. Once again, the most junior of his fellow bureaucrats to hold such a position, he now found himself as the chief liaison between the superintendents and the Normal Schools. In only fourteen years since his first teaching assignment, he had risen to a position within the educational bureaucracy of the Province to which few rural teachers would have dreamed aspire. He had proven extremely adept at recognizing opportunity and seizing the initiative. His diligence and enterprise had not gone unnoticed by his superiors, as his rapid promotion at such a young age proves.

Two years later, at age 41, W.H. Swift was appointed Deputy Minister of Education, chosen over the man who seemed to be the logical successor, the highly respected H.C. Newland. Chapters V and VI examined Swift's tenure as Deputy Minister, 1946-1966 and his post-retirement career, the former outlining the day to day activities of the job itself. Under particular scrutiny were the circumstances which surrounded his final promotion.

When describing the duties of the Deputy Minister of Education, it was noted that the efficient, smooth operation of the Department was the chief concern. Thus, the Deputy Minister's persona was that of a "take charge person," although not a dictator. Number two, of course, was to show leadership with respect to education itself. That, however,

was not an area in which the Deputy Minister had supremacy, because senior to him was the Minister, and below him were his senior officers. Still, it can be argued that, at least during the period Swift held the position, the Deputy Minister of Education represented some stability and continuity, since theoretically, he retained the position when governments and, therefore, Ministers changed. There was, therefore, an opportunity to pass on such knowledge to a series of Ministers.

Swift also helped maintain the definition of the role of Deputy according to the tradition established by his predecessor, McNally. In similar fashion, Giles noted that S.J. Willis of British Columbia, helped maintain the history of his Department and "was able to call up an institutional memory of what had gone on before."<sup>1</sup>

The Deputy Minister's position was, at least during the period discussed, an apolitical one. This was according to British tradition dating from the civil service in Victorian times. Civil servants are not elected and do not take an active role in party politics or controversy. This does not mean that they are not political beings, nor insensitive to issues. Rather, while civil servants are engaged in policy making, they are encouraged to maintain a low profile. Nevertheless, the issue of loyalty to one's Minister was crucial. It was pointed out by one former Deputy Minister

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<sup>1</sup>Giles, 188.

that the job entailed serving the Minister, helping the Minister do the best job he or she could. A fundamental issue had to do with the idea that the Minister's public persona had to be a healthy one. Public embarrassment, for example had to be avoided. Another issue brought up in this regard had to do with adapting to the Minister's personal schedule. If this did not conform to the accepted work day, so be it.

It was also pointed out that Swift's long tenure in the position allowed him to comment on how the role of Deputy Minister changed between 1946 and 1966. By the time Swift became Deputy Minister, the size of the administration had increased. Everything became more complex, the population of the Province was growing and so to did the bureaucracy. Swift maintained that earlier on, McNally and he seemed to be much more in the public eye, than later. This was also confirmed in the Department's archival records. For example, according to Departmental correspondence during the last years of Swift's tenure, the Chief Superintendent of Schools seemed to be taking on more and more of the responsibilities previously undertaken by the Deputy Minister. Swift contended that by the Lougheed era, Ministers were provided with a senior executive secretary or assistant. From that point on, the Minister's chief advisor was his or her executive secretary, not the Deputy Minister, whose influence was diminished.

Chapter VI examined examples of Swift at work. His leadership in the areas of vocational education and curriculum

change were examined in some detail as was his work as a facilitator on the Universities Commission in the creation of the Universities of Calgary and Lethbridge after his retirement.

Singled out for more intensive scrutiny were Swift's actions with regard to the Atlee school closure issue in 1958. Bill Swift, as Deputy, was the focal point in the Department's communications to the different sides in the dispute. It was Swift who was most often looked upon to provide the correct interpretation of the School Act, and thus clearly articulate the Government's position. However, as evidenced by his actions in this affair, it was clear that the Atlee parents had legitimate complaints. Even though the Division was well within its rights to enforce the closing of the Atlee school and enforce bussing to Jenner, nineteen miles away, there was a moral imperative that had to take precedence in this case. Given the unique circumstances, Swift was not so bound by the rules of convention and the School Act that a decision could not be made for the general good of the children and parents of Atlee.

The varied ground represented in the list of those educational changes in which Swift played a major role is quite striking. This reflects not only upon his versatility and talent but upon his vast experience in all facets of education in the Province. Quite simply, even by the time of his appointment as Deputy Minister, Swift was among the finest

and most experienced educational administrators the Province had.

At the risk of taking on the inevitable "whiggish"<sup>2</sup> hue, it is important to recognize that, among his accomplishments in the position, all involved much administrative work and direct involvement. Those of major importance could be counted as milestones in the Province's educational history. For example, the development of the County System in which local municipal and school governments were merged. Related to this was the establishment of the Coterminous Boundaries Commission which rearranged the boundaries of municipal and school areas so that they coincided.

Regarding the development of higher education in the province, Swift developed the School Buildings Act, The Students' Assistance Act and the development of legislation establishing public junior colleges. He was also closely involved with the building of the Alberta School for the Deaf.

Swift was also involved, albeit unobtrusively, with the establishment of the Royal Commission on Education (Cameron Commission). This Commission conducted a survey of the elementary and secondary school systems of Alberta, and was, in large part, undertaken as a result of criticism levelled at

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<sup>2</sup>The term "whig" history was first applied to that branch of historiography which saw the past through "rose coloured glasses", an interpretation in which "progress" was integral. The approach is often used to justify the present and to laud past heroes. Obviously, biographies must tread a fine line here. The term was first used by Herbert Butterfield in The Whig Interpretation of History, (1931).

the existing, supposedly "progressive-based," curriculum by the "essentialist," back-to-the-basics movement.<sup>3</sup>

Swift oversaw the introduction of the Government subsidized school book rental plan and helped establish the School Foundation Programme Fund which placed a financial floor under the school programme in Alberta. He assisted in setting up the Northland School Division to give efficient educational facilities and organizations to isolated areas in Northern Alberta. Finally, in terms of teacher education, he was involved in the raising of the minimum period of training to two years beyond matriculation. Even following retirement Swift was engaged in a number of activities which called for his expertise, his aforementioned work on the Universities Commission being one example.

Chapter VII examined W.H. Swift's educational thought as a philosophic backdrop to his life as an educator, writer, and educational policy-maker. As an aid to understanding, comparisons were made between Swift, his educational thought and his perception of correct policy, and the nineteenth century archetype of the senior bureaucrat as advocated by Henry Taylor.<sup>4</sup> The suggestion was made that Swift, through his behaviour and the ease with which he adapted to the senior bureaucratic "attitude" manifested in the upper echelons of

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<sup>3</sup>S.C.T. Clarke, ed., The Cameron Report: A Condensation of the Report of the Royal Commission on Education in Alberta, (Edmonton: The Alberta Teachers' Association, 1960.)

<sup>4</sup>Henry Taylor, The Statesman.



the Province's Department of Education, might have represented an example of this nineteenth century imperial "tradition."

What was the driving force behind Swift's actions as an educational administrator? Chapter VII also examined Swift's character and personality. It was maintained that Swift represented an exemplar to his subordinates in the Department of education. Hart's typology of the "exemplar of virtue" was used in this regard to provide a framework for analysis.

Swift was a self-described pragmatist. However this was not in the sense that it was connected to Dewey's educational philosophy. Swift termed this his "non-philosophy of education."<sup>5</sup> This attitude is telling. To the very end, Swift maintained the, almost inbred, nineteenth century British senior civil service ethos whereby taking a definitive stand might not have been perceived as "proper." He held that when any question arose or proposal was presented, he would do his best to analyze it with respect to its inherent merits, and to the best of his ability, thus, deriving a basis for action. In this, according to his evaluation of the field of educational administration as a whole, he was not alone. This was so, Swift argued, somewhat nebulously, "because of the nature of the processes being administered and their interrelationship with political structures."<sup>6</sup>

Swift stressed the creation of "good citizens" as one of

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<sup>5</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 17, 1994.

<sup>6</sup>Swift, Educational Administration, 60.

public education's fundamental goals and that schooling had to be a meld of the academic and the practical, the three "R's" were vital. In terms of morals, Swift held that while schooling had always attempted moral education, it never truly provided the means for this to be accomplished. Swift maintained that this was partly because it was not, in his view, possible to teach morality. He argued that it was something that young people picked up from those with whom they were associated, for good or for bad. For example, he pointed out that in the normal schools, there was no course on morals. Yet, it was desirable to develop teachers who were good citizens and would have a good moral effect on the children.

In terms of what could be described as "nationalism," Swift believed that all of us as citizens should have an allegiance to our country, that we should be proud of it, that we should do what we can to make it a better place for everyone. As to the issue of multiculturalism vis a vis nationalism, Swift reasoned that there was no right or wrong in the debate. However, he came down on the side of what he termed "integration."

On education and society, Swift maintained that education always seemed to be in a state of flux. This, he argued, was because schooling was but one aspect of the total social structure, and the whole itself is constantly in motion, and increasingly so. This approach harkened back to the Gestalt-

like strategy evident in his doctoral dissertation so many years before. For Swift, the structure and nature of education changed because the milieu in which the schools operate changes. One of the tasks of the educational planner, he argued, is to adapt the schools quickly and effectively to these changed circumstances and needs. This, once again, reflected Swift's pragmatic approach.

While having little regard for educational theory, Swift offered several generalizations pertaining to the issue of change in educational organization or practice. First of all, he contended that changes in educational practice arose largely out of dissatisfaction with the results of existing procedure. Second, Swift held that there was rarely to be found an educational practice, actual or proposed, which does not at one and the same time have something to commend it and something to condemn it. Hence, any decision was either in the nature of a compromise or in the direction which reflected current emphases, whether pedagogical, political, economic, or even emotional. It was noted that the Atlee affair was a prime example of Swift's thinking in this regard.

Finally, according to Swift, it is public opinion which finally determines what is done in the schools. Clearly reflecting his views as a career-long public servant, he maintained that the schools are the public's schools. The people who run them are a combination of the elected and employed servants of the public. Swift argued that the

educationists may make plans and to some extent may implement them with some degree of impunity but if, in the long run, the plans do not suit the public, they must be changed.

Swift chose a much different path, early in his career, than many of his notable contemporaries. Rather than concentrating on teaching as a vocation, Swift chose, as circumstances and his own talents permitted, the governmental-administrative side of the endeavour. This was reflective of his later emphasis on the practical.

Two aspects were examined which may have influenced Swift's later outlook and attitudes, and helped, to some extent, to forge his personality. One of these might have been his rural mercantile family background and early experience during the Great Depression as a frontier school inspector in the Athabasca Territory. No doubt Swift's inclination toward the functional-pragmatic side of education was created, not only from these rural-small town beginnings, but from his experiences in the hinterland that was the Athabasca territory of the early 1930s.

To the end of his life, W.H. Swift remained closely involved with his church. In 1972, Knox united with Metropolitan to form the combined congregation of Knox-Metropolitan. Swift served as one of the chief negotiators in bringing the union about and also served in a number of capacities in the new congregation as well.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>W.H. Swift, Unpublished Memoirs, n.d.

This was a long, spiritual association which may have had a profound influence on him. It was, for example, the United Church's requirement that theological students be university trained, which led to modernist views on the part of the clergy. It would be reasonable to suggest that it would be inevitable that these views would be shared by many in the congregation. Thus, it might be in keeping with a more "modern" liberal theological doctrine, that Swift was able to refer to ". . . various characters in the Bible, and particularly Christ, as examples of persons who did a 'good thing', the 'right thing', . . . who did something for their fellow man."<sup>8</sup> Swift's views may well have been similar to those of a previous generation. Both Samuel Willis, Deputy Minister of Education in British Columbia between 1919 and 1945 and his contemporary, Robert Falconer, President of the University of Toronto, were described by Giles as individuals "for whom a unifying thread was Christian idealism that was flexible enough to accommodate other strands of truth."<sup>9</sup> Both were members of the United Church.<sup>10</sup>

Protestant denominations such as the Anglican and the United Church were also closely associated with the middle and upper classes. Along with membership in the Rotary Club, an identification with either of these religious organizations

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<sup>8</sup>Personal interview with W.H. Swift, June 17, 1994.

<sup>9</sup>Giles, 7.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 7.

brought with it notions of respectability. It was noted that, not only was Swift a staunch member of the United Church, but he was an enthusiastic Rotarian, and, in later years, involved in its leadership. Although from Swift's point of view, religious affiliation played no significant part in the decision-making process of the upper echelons of the Department of Education, there can be little doubt that it permeated many aspects of his day to day life.

The evidence shows that there can be a reasonable argument made that Swift might have represented an example of the archetypal senior civil servant in the nineteenth century British imperial "tradition." He represented continuity, both in his core values and beliefs, and in his eager acceptance, at a relatively young age, of the bureaucratic ethos.

Swift's actions, attitude and behaviour met many of Henry Taylor's criteria for the ideal senior civil servant. His pragmatism, for example, fit the mould, as it was not overtly philosophical in nature. Swift was able to set aside idealism to focus on the concrete in order to put policy into action, often in face to face encounters with the public. The imposition by Swift, of a sense of order throughout the working day, of the strict separation between work and home, were all vestiges of a bygone era. Taylor appealed for calm in the world of the nineteenth century statesman.

According to Taylor, the ideal civil servant might have the following traits: one who is in no way radical, either in

philosophy, politics or manner; an industrious and efficient worker who is capable of making relatively quick, but informed, well thought out, decisions; one who is able to make productive use of the expertise around him. Bill Swift, by the time of his arrival as Deputy Minister of Education, matched these criteria. To these must also be added his intimate knowledge of all aspects of the educational process, and his strong background in administration. It was demonstrated that he displayed these traits early in his career.

Swift may have been among the last of his kind with regard to Taylor's nineteenth century criteria. By his final years as Deputy Minister, the position had become more and more complex, requiring the delegation of tasks formerly routinely performed by the Deputy Minister.

It was argued as well, that Swift might be viewed as among the last of the self-made moral exemplars - someone to whom subordinates in the Department could look up to, as Swift did with his predecessor to provide leadership and continuity in the Department of Education, someone whose "character" was beyond question. It was pointed out that, like the United States, Canada began to lose touch with her exemplars after World War Two. As administration became more and more complex and departments became larger, "professionalism" and proper credentials began to supersede mere good character in terms of who would be chosen for key administrative positions.

Specifically, it was argued, this scenario might be applied to Alberta's Department of Education as it expanded throughout the 1960s and beyond. Swift himself had held that, prior to the "professionalization" of educational administration beginning in the 1950s, strong character traits such as intelligence, diligence, initiative, and other virtues, were given much more significance when choosing the right person for higher administrative positions in the civil service.<sup>11</sup> After Swift, and particularly, after Byrne, the Department may have become too large for one man to lead by example.

Four categories were identified as characteristics of the moral exemplar. First, good moral character must be a constant aspect of the personality of the exemplar; it is not a sometime thing. A reasonable case might be made that Bill Swift fulfilled this prerequisite. Given an acknowledgment that "good moral character" would be a precondition for constant and rapid promotion through the ranks of the Department of Education, a rise which culminated in Swift's appointment to the highest civil service position the Department had to offer, the Deputy Minister, then it must be assumed that Swift's good character was a consistent trait.

Second, the exemplar must act intentionally and freely: there can be no compulsion involved. Swift was not compelled to make certain decisions other than by the circumstances of the moment. Although a case could be made that he was bound

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<sup>11</sup>W.H. Swift, Educational Administration in Canada, 5.



by such intangibles as The School Act, Department policy and tradition, no compulsion toward a particular decision is evident.

The third characteristic, that the exemplar must be relatively faultless, could be difficult to live up to. However, Hart qualified this by adding that "he or she need not be perfect in all things but must always strive for virtue in most things."<sup>12</sup> Can anyone live a life without some anxieties brought on by circumstances out of one's control? Two examples were given in which it might be contended that Swift fell temporarily from grace, but these were minor episodes and, at least as far as the available evidence was concerned, Swift's life did seem to run smoother than most. For all that, given the lack of evidence to the contrary, it can be reasonably argued that Bill Swift did strive for virtue in most things.

Finally, the actions of the exemplar must bring about real good, even in failure: one's moral actions must never be frivolous. In some instances, wrote Hart, the example counts for more than the substantial success.<sup>13</sup> It cannot be denied that Swift's actions did bring about real good in terms of public education in the Province of Alberta. Numerous examples of Swift's achievements throughout his career have been outlined throughout this dissertation.

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<sup>12</sup>Hart, 15.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 15.

Swift's accomplishments are best revealed through historical records, albeit incomplete, his own recollections and those of his contemporaries. Although many pieces of the riddle are missing, evidence of his influence exists, albeit only in sometimes fragmentary accounts. By recorded examples and by inference it is possible to contend that his influence was considerable and his impact significant. It might also be argued that it is precisely because Swift was so effective as Deputy Minister, that direct evidence of his hands-on involvement in many of the accomplishments attributed to him by his contemporaries, is hard to come by. A similar conclusion was arrived at by Valerie Giles in her biographical treatment of S.J. Willis who was Deputy Minister of Education in British Columbia between 1919 and 1945.<sup>14</sup> Willis would have been a contemporary of Swift's predecessor, G.F. McNally in Alberta. Like both Swift and McNally, Willis had an exceptionally long tenure as Deputy. However, unlike his counterparts in Alberta, Willis did not gain his early teaching experience in the Province in which he would eventually serve. His early experience and higher education was gained in his native Prince Edward Island and eventually by attending McGill University. While Giles' study described and analyzed the structure and changes inherent in British Columbia's Department of Education and how Willis functioned within it, there was little indication of what Willis actually

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<sup>14</sup>Giles, 185.

did on a day to day basis, nor was there any real analysis of the man's personality, of what made him worthy of study.

To the other extreme, in some ways was David Royal's excellent analysis of Mark Holmes, longtime professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.<sup>15</sup> Royal, at times, used stream of consciousness in his use of Holmes' philosophic ideas and life story as a springboard toward an analysis of "traditional" education in Canada. Royal, in taking the opposite approach to Giles, concentrated more on the idea of traditional education through Holmes' life rather than any tangible description of how Holmes actually put these ideas into practice.

Similar, in many ways to the methodological approach taken in this dissertation was Susan McCue's treatment of Andrew Holt, one-time President of the University of Tennessee<sup>16</sup>. Through interviews and documentary evidence, a thorough character analysis was attempted to help explain Holt's life over a career in education that spanned some fifty years. Like Swift, Holt could be described as an exemplar of sorts. He was described by McCue as "a principled man with a dedication to education for the masses and a high standard of

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<sup>15</sup>David William Royal, "Portrait of a Traditional Educator", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1996.

<sup>16</sup>Susan Harris McCue, "Life History of Andrew David Holt: An Interpretive Biography of One of Tennessee's Leading Educators", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Tennessee, 1995.

servant leadership."<sup>17</sup>

This dissertation has deliberately attempted the above approach. Through documentary evidence and personal interviews it examined Swift's personality to elucidate the character traits which enabled him to adapt and thrive in the political and bureaucratic milieu in which he found himself for such an extended period of time.

What of the man, Bill Swift? This study has shown that in his work, Swift displayed confidence in his abilities and was considered by many to be a perfectionist. Although a stickler for the letter of the School Act, he also believed in the moral good, as was exemplified in the Atlee case. The case showed Swift as an astute negotiator who balanced bureaucratic rules while responding to and meeting the needs of the people who were subjected to those rules. While working to the letter of the School Act he was still able to find a compromise.

Swift had his spiritual side, through his involvement with the United Church, but was also an adherent to the scientific method. In his social interactions, Swift could be described as a loner, an insular man with few close friends, to paraphrase his eldest son's description. Despite this, Swift was an extremely loyal individual and able to project a public persona that was collegial, polite, nonjudgmental, and which met the tasks at hand with efficiency and acumen. Not

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., iv.

only do his actions as a civil servant reflect this, but also his experiences as an educator. He was also loyal to his students both in the Normal Schools and to those he was responsible for as an inspector. His avid participation in student clubs and sporting events at Calgary Normal and his actions in defence of the young Japanese-Canadian scholarship winner during the Second World War attest to this.

In a lifetime association with education in the Province of Alberta, W.H. Swift's career represents a unique opportunity for the educational historian. Its very breadth allows one the possibility of viewing the provincial administration of education from the macro, as well as the micro-analytic, point of view. Few other senior educational leaders in the province have been witness to the changes Swift observed in his lifetime. Few others found themselves in positions of authority for such an extended period of time, in Swift's case, starting with his principalship in Calgary in 1938 and extending to his retirement as Deputy Minister of Education in 1966. This allows the administrative analyst an overall view of the structure, the *raison d'etre*, the various reorganizations, and the general workings of the Department of Education during the period covered. Further, this is true, not only of the era in which Swift held senior positions in the bureaucracy, but also that period stretching as far back as 1930 when he first became involved in school inspection in the Athabasca territory. On the other hand, these same

factors would allow a micro-analysis of considerations that might have influenced Swift's decision-making process as a senior bureaucrat. Whichever approach is taken, the facts are that W.H. Swift was in a position of influence and power both during periods of revolutionary curricular change and, alternatively, during periods of more conservative retrenchment.

Given the material presented in this biography, other possibilities for future research come to mind. On a national level, work remains to be done on the Canadian Education Association. This umbrella organization which provides a forum for senior administrators and educators in different parts of the country remains an untapped source of potential for those seeking to interpret educational policy at the highest levels. Although Patterson described the organization briefly in his Profiles of Canadian Educators<sup>18</sup>, a full treatment is yet to be done.

Likewise, at the provincial tier, closer study of educational societies such as those found in Edmonton and Calgary might yield clues toward a clearer understanding of what factors precipitate change in educational philosophy, and eventually, policy. In the Province of Alberta, at any rate, calls for change in educational policy have often been driven by the political and economic climate at the grassroots level.

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<sup>18</sup>Robert S. Patterson, John W. Chalmers, John W. Friesen, eds., Profiles of Canadian Educators, (D.C. Heath, 1974).

Historically, these concerns have been quickly exploited by populist politicians. Local educational societies of this kind might serve as outlets for discussion of these issues and may foreshadow eventual changes in official government educational policy. Certainly for those involved in the upper echelons of education in the Province of Alberta in the 1930s, 40's and 50's, for example. W.H. Swift, G.F. McNally, M.E. LaZerte and H.C. Newland, informal discussions of this type may have often provided the philosophical backdrop which created and justified educational change. As well as Patterson's treatment of the societies themselves, Amy von Heyking's outstanding recent study of the development of the social studies curriculum in Alberta contributed greatly towards our understanding of the role played and the inner workings of those "think tanks."

It must be acknowledged that without Swift's ability to focus on the practical and sometimes tedious assessment of the pros and cons of the job at hand, important changes in the educational landscape of the Province may never have taken place or, at the very least, may have been significantly delayed. Evidence was offered time and time again of the value of Swift's ability to successfully deal on nearly every level with the public with regard to their concerns. The truth is that when ideas put forth by educational theoreticians are accepted and become official policy, someone like W.H. Swift must find a way to implement them and turn

them into reality. When political administrations or ministerial appointments changed, W.H. Swift represented continuity in the administration of education in the Province. From the point of view of experience and understanding of the expanse of the educational landscape, Bill Swift, by the time of his appointment as Deputy Minister to his retirement, was the finest the Department had, and was acknowledged as such.



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## Appendix "A"

As of 1947, Alberta's Department of Education was typical of most provinces breaking down in the following fashion:

### Chief Officers

Minister of Education - R.E. Ansley  
 Deputy Minister - W.H. Swift  
 Chief Superintendent of Schools - W.E. Frame  
 Director of School Administration - H.E. Balfour  
 Director of Curriculum - M.C. Watts  
 Associate Director of Curriculum - A.B. Evenson  
 Registrar - D.M. Sullivan  
 Department Secretary - J.F. Swan  
 Director Correspondence School Branch - G.F. Bruce  
 Manager, School Books Branch - W.H. Noble  
 Principal, Institute of Technology and Art, Calgary - J. Fowler

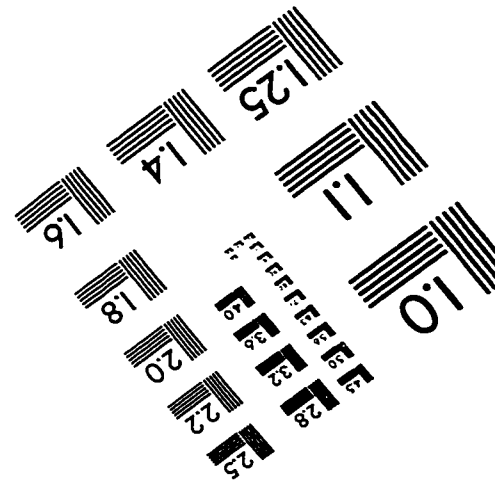
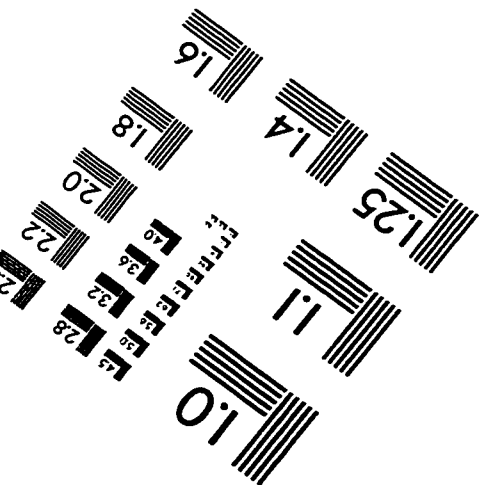
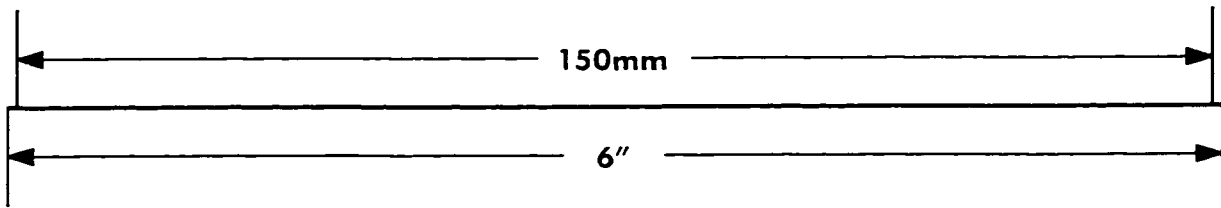
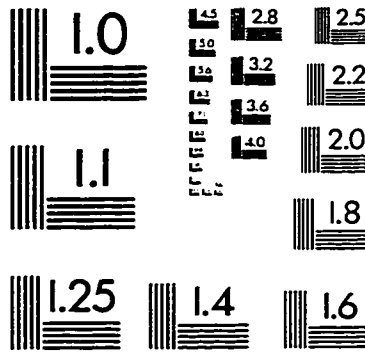
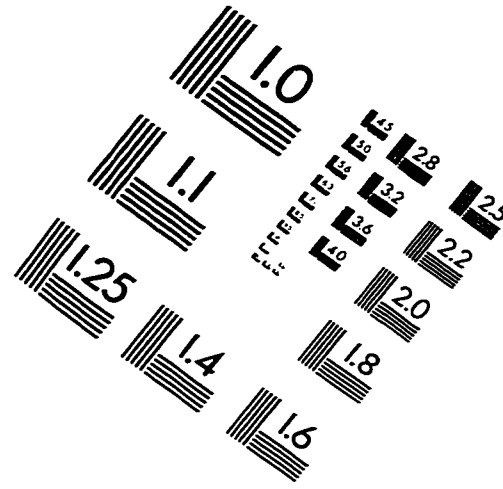
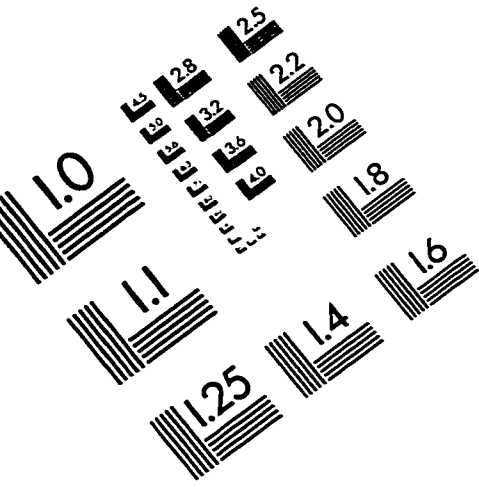
### Supervisory Officers

Three High School Inspectors  
 Fifty Elementary School Inspectors and Superintendents of School Divisions  
 Supervisor of Guidance  
 Supervisor of Home Economics  
 Supervisor of Industrial Arts  
 Field Administration Officer  
 School Grants Branch  
 Buildings Branch  
 Debenchers Branch  
 Audio Visual Branch  
 Exams Branch<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Correspondence, Swift to C.E. Phillips, May 6, 1947.  
 P.A.A. Acc. No. 79.334, Box 11, File 91.

# IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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