

## Bilingual De Charbonnel

by Helen Cameron

De Charbonnel High School is an example of bilingualism at work.

Founded in 1952 by les Soeurs de la Congregation de Notre Dame, the school's original purpose was to help French-speaking students retain their mother tongue in an English-speaking milieu. Today, although the majority of De Charbonnel's 155 students are of French-Canadian origin, its purpose has been expanded to that of promoting French as a usable and working language.

The school has advanced greatly from its origins in the Notre Dame Sisters' residence on St. George Street. Today it's situated in a large red-brick house only five minutes from Glendon College. Classrooms, a gym and library have all been added to the original building. And for the first time, this year, portables have been necessary.

Sister Le May, the school's principal, came to De Charbonnel in 1954. At that time, she recalls, it consisted of only 36 female students, 15 of whom were boarders. The school supported itself financially through tuition fees and help from the Sisters.

Eight years later, the school became co-educational and restricted to day-students. These come from Catholic and non-Catholic homes and from all parts of Toronto. Some travel up to an hour and a half by bus to get to and from school.

Most of the classes are taught in French — mathematics and science being the exceptions since French textbooks were unobtainable. Explanations in these subjects, however, are given in French. Students aren't forced to answer in French in class, but most realize that by not doing so, they are defeating the purpose of attending De Charbonnel. Homework too, is done primarily in French.

Recently the Separate School Board took grades nine and ten under its jurisdiction, providing all necessary books, portables and teachers. Thus, for purely financial reasons the majority of the school's students are in these two grades. Grades 11 and 12 are still dependent on tuition fees for survival. Sister Le May would like to see the addition of grade 13 next year, when hopefully there will be enough students and enough room to support another class.

Few of the students speak French at home. Indeed, several are of totally English background. But, says Sister Le May, "If a De Charbonnel student works reasonably hard, the chances of his not being bilingual at the end of his high school education are slim".

De Charbonnel can no longer be classified as an experimental school — it is already, in many respects, a success. After 16 years of promoting bilingualism, it is reaping the rewards. Former students are returning as teachers, and present students are being offered more opportunities for bilingualism through help from the separate school board.



photo: Lorne Colt

Everyone loves a camera

## East End High - a Metro high school where the curriculum fits the students

by C. Mills

East End High School looks like a concentration camp.

How apt! — for most high schools. East End's high wire fences and wire-covered windows are protection from neighbourhood vandals, not bitter symbols of the Secondary School Authoritarianism Syndrome. The forbidding portable buildings which house all but a few of its hops and classrooms are evidence of the urgency of the school's existence.

For thirty-one hours each week, East End High School is noisy with life, as five hundred and seventy-seven "young gentlemen" (as they are always called by their teachers) mould themselves to the high school routine.

Not quite. This high school's routine moulds itself to the students. And these boys are very special students; unable to be promoted into grade nine, most have "transferred" into the first year of a two-year high school. It has been recognized that their aptitudes are manual rather than academic. The course of study involves almost equal amounts of academic and shop courses weighted on the side of the shops.

The academic curriculum is extremely flexible, tailored to students, not the school board. A course may even change from minute to minute as a class becomes restive: the average span of attention is from four to nine minutes. If a book can't hold the interest of a class, a set of new texts is ordered. Books are available in the classroom, but not issued to the students. Why? Here it comes — there's no homework.

On the vocational side, there are eighteen shops, providing training in such varied fields as commercial art, upholstery, electrical wiring, trowel trades, and auto mechanics. In addition, a student may take music or business options. The school has an excellent physical education staff (although facilities are less than ideal) and two very successful football teams.

Principal R. S. McEwen, the

school's head since its opening two years ago, explained some of the prospects and problems of East End High School.

"We want to help these boys become productive, responsible citizens . . . to help them lose the sense of inferiority which results from deep feelings of alienation . . . coming from lower income brackets, many from broken homes, their emotions are very close to the surface . . . they can't be expected not to blow up and use language they hear constantly at home . . ."

For these reasons discipline is very subtle; the policy is to walk softly and carry no stick.

Punctuality and attendance are the greatest problems with teenagers who have always thought of school as a prison, or at best a drag. Understandably, there is a high drop-out rate.

Next to discipline problems, the major area of concern is over facilities. Although the Toronto Board of Education is very generous, more boys want and need to get into East End than can be accommodated. And the "main foyer" does get slightly damp and draughty at times!

Moreover maintaining the current teacher-student ratio of 1:14 will become increasingly difficult as enrollment swells. Mr. McEwen seeks teachers who are "concerned, sympathetic . . . (and yet) have personalities strong enough to hold the attention of a class." Viewing the overall situation, one concludes that what he really needs are M.S.W.'s with training at O.C.E. and maybe Aylmer!

The most striking aspect of East End High School is its atmosphere, characterized by an almost incredible degree of mutual respect between teachers and students. One is surprised at the amount of banter and "back-talk" in most classes. Administration and faculty alike seem to have a sincere concern for the welfare and growth of the students.

Well! A student-centred, non-exam-oriented school, right here in good ol' Metro! Imagine that!

Bet you can't.

## The three R's Muskoka style

by Stew Smith

In the last few years, the years beginning the technological era, much has been said about the changes needed by our educational system. Unfortunately very little is ever done, but it sure is a good way to get elected. It appears that on a public level it will be a long time before anything that is radical, in the form of a new shaping of the system, is done. At present all the changes that can be made are on the shoulders and consciences of those who have stepped outside, the state system altogether.

One of the best examples of this is Muskoka Lakes College. It is a private school and therefore is relatively free from the weight of officialdom. It is an experiment that has not reached a conclusion but has settled upon many methods.

MLC was set up in 1966 as an attempt to allow the poorer students in the regular systems an opportunity to prove and improve themselves academically and emotionally. It was not felt that these students were slow or emotionally screwed up, but that they were simply unable to evolve into their full potential self in the schools provided by the state.

In establishing MLC, James Allen chose a group of exceptionally intelligent flunkies, an equally dedicated teaching staff, and a summer lodge in the Muskokas, six miles west of Bracebridge. The ingredients were ready, now came the mixing.

When the students first arrived, the scene was unbelievable. Everybody was smiling, teachers and students were talking, playing pool and insulting one another, doing all those things that are supposed to come to an end on the first day of school. The students were told that they would be under no regulations whatsoever and that if regulations were to come, due to necessity, they would be reached by a mutual agreement of staff and students.

The scene was cool.

**"Twenty years of school, and they put you on the day shift" — Bob Dylan**

Unfortunately it was a little too cool.

It was soon apparent that no work was being done at all and that the students were spending most of their time telling each other lies about themselves. Remember, these were ordinary kids. Some kind of solution had to be reached. In order to do as promised, with an agreement between staff and students, the latter had to form some sort of official body to decide what its stand would be. With the help of the staff the students formed a democratic state within the school under which each person would have an equal say in what

was to be done. They decided to meet every week, and did they ever. Everyone got their turn to speak and speak and speak.

The students received their first benefit from the new system — they learned that true democracy, in its originally conceived state is too impractical to work in any effective manner. They were able to reach some kind of conclusion about the lack of book learning that was going on though. Classes, which were already set up but not attended, would be frequented until a student could prove that he was progressing in the subject, and then he could skip all the classes that he liked with only an occasional reappearance to prove to his tutor that he was still on top of his subject.

**"Now if the students are encouraged to think for themselves, we may call the man a good teacher." — Confucius**

The classes themselves were unique for this country in that they were composed of seldom more than six or seven students, a tutor and all the relaxation that one could possibly imagine. The sort of arrangement where one would have his feet up on a table, a cigarette in one hand and a bottle of pop in the other, while telling his tutor that he was out of his fucking mind. Haven't you always really wanted to do that? You should have because it makes learning from the man a lot easier.

The courses that were studied were the conventional ones but they weren't done exactly the same way. Things like grade 13 English were finished about half way through the year so that more meaningful work could be done in books that the students wanted to read and understand. When last year the province relinquished their right of choosing courses and setting the grade 13 exams the students at MLC really had a ball. Now they were a full voice in deciding what was to be studied and what was to be discarded.

About two months after the school was established a disaster hit.

A few of the lads had decided that it was time to get high, and what better place to do it than at the house of one of the teachers. So with bottles in hand they went through with it. The outcome was that the barrier between staff and students could not be totally removed because in doing this party-bit both had threatened the school with suspension by breaking provincial laws. The Utopia had ended. Now there were those who taught and those that listened. The school continued though in very good spirits with an understanding between all that this was a for-real place, a place that for some would be their last chance.

Now MLC has almost fully developed a set of unwritten laws that allow it to exist as a community. The kids and the staff live with one another in a relatively calm atmosphere in which learning, both academic and the real stuff goes on from the time one gets up until one falls into bed exhausted at the end of the day. Here learning has become so important to the flunkies of the other system that they

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