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Education



*Of what use is a university education
to a young man unless he comes
under the influence of instructors
who astonish him?*

Robertson Davies,
A Voice from the Attic.

The styles and goals of education change over the years, and Canada's have changed dramatically since World War II. An international survey team concluded that in those three decades Canada had moved from being "one of the less developed of the great democracies" educationally to a position of leadership. Its most striking success has been in the increased accessibility of its schools. Just about every Canadian now attends primary and secondary schools, and a great many go on to college, university or special training. In this issue of CANADA TODAY/D'AUJOURD'HUI we give an interim report on Canadian classrooms.

Cover photo: Robertson Davies—novelist, playwright, essayist, critic, humorist, and teacher.

The Trouble with Students

Robertson Davies, author of the trilogy **Fifth Business**, **The Manticore** and **World of Wonders**, is one of Canada's most distinguished men of letters. He is also Master of Massey College, a prestigious graduate school associated with the University of Toronto, and he is currently writing a novel about university life. Below, he talks about students, history, language and money.

The Knowledge of History

Today's Canadian graduate students are much ahead of those in my day because graduate studies then were just making a beginning. As for American students—we have a lot of them at the University of Toronto—they have a terribly narrow knowledge of history. They only know American history and something called civics. They do not know Queen Victoria from Henry VIII. This gives them a very limited idea of the past. Some make the effort but some never do, and this is evident in a good deal of the scholarly writing of our time—a lack of historical sense. The Canadian students aren't very good either.

Language

It is as though [the students of today] are unable to understand that what they have written can be interpreted three or four different ways. They all lack a definite sense of language. They were not instructed in language and in historical studies. Instead they have been taught how to make the Tomb of Christ out of cardboard. They've had little training in speaking with clarity. It is fortunately correctable. I simply insist that students make verbal presentations in seminars. I say you may talk as you wish, but if you wish to be understood you must learn the Mandarin dialect, English as it is spoken by educated people in England and the United States. What you have to understand is that you cannot express an idea accurately until you have thought accurately, and to do that you must have the vocabulary.

University Finances

Until five years ago the Canadian universities got a lot of money from provincial governments. The governments wanted scientists and engineers. They were interested in what they called goal-oriented research—striped paint for barber poles. Governments are capricious, so they turned on the universities. It is always a popular thing to do; they see it as cutting out frills. Fees must be raised, and the students resent it. Students don't seem to have much grasp of economics, even those who are studying economics. They protest that the university fees are too high, but they do not seem to realize that when fees are low the difference is paid by taxes.

The universities are cutting staffs by not replacing those who retire. I am not at all sure that a lack of affluence isn't very good for a university. They certainly waste money on scientific stuff. Now the scientists are having to work out their problems, making what they need out of safety pins.



The Canadian Way

All Canadian children above the ages of six or seven (depending on the province or territory) must go to school.

Almost all the schools—from kindergarten through university—are supported by the taxpayers.

The British North America Act of 1867 gave the provinces exclusive jurisdiction, and they provide most of the money and set up their own individual systems. There is no federal department of education, but the federal government is responsible for educating non-assimilated Indians and Eskimos.

In Alberta and Newfoundland an apt student can get a college degree in fifteen years; in Prince Edward Island it takes sixteen, and in Quebec and Ontario it can take seventeen. Ontario's secondary schools offer an optional thirteenth year, and students taking it need attend university for only three years to qualify for a degree, or four years for an honours degree.

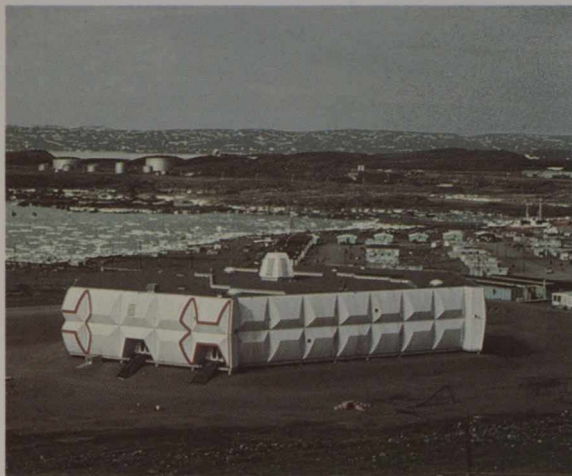
The whole system is currently going through a crisis of adjustment. As the baby boom bulge has passed through the grades, enrollments have fallen. Between 1971-72 and 1976-77 the number of pupils in grades one through six dropped 14.4 per cent, and the number in grades seven through thirteen, 11 per cent. In 1968 there were 3.8 mil-

lion elementary students; in 1979 there were 2.6 million.

The number of secondary students, which peaked at 1.9 million in 1977, is expected to drop to 1.4 million by the early 1990s.

Canada has more than 60 chartered universities and 140 community colleges, many with satellite campuses. In 1978-79 the number of post-secondary students dropped for the first time, by 1.4 per cent. Still, some 900,000 full and part-time students were enrolled in 1980.

The development of community colleges



The Gordon Robertson Education Centre in Frobisher Bay, N.W.T., named after the former Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, was opened in 1971. It offers academic and pre-vocational training to 272 students in grades 7 through 12.

(called Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, or CAATs, in Ontario and *Collèges d'enseignement général et professionnel*, or CEGEPs, in Quebec) may be Canada's most significant innovation. Higher education is now far more accessible in Canada (and the United States) than in most European countries. Dr. James Perkins, head of the International Council for Educational Development, has noted that the ease with which this has happened remains a puzzle to most Europeans.

In Canada a prime factor was the Technical and Vocational Training Act of 1960, which provided federal funding for building and staffing an expanded technical and community college system throughout the country.

A Brief History

The first Canadian public schools opened around 1820.

They usually consisted of a single room in a log building. Teachers, often old or disabled soldiers or men too sickly to work at more vigorous jobs, were housed and fed by the parents on a rotating basis. Equipment was minimal—a wall slate for writing, a lectern for the teacher and benches without backs for the pupils. The pupils ranged in age from six to sixteen, each receiving instruction at his own level.

They were graduated after four or five years,



Students in Glenelg, Ontario, 1910.

usually with only a smattering of learning. By mid-century a third of the population could read and write with ease, another third could read haltingly, and the rest were illiterate.

Education then was the cheapest and simplest government service, casually planned and easily paid for. Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick retained full control of their educational systems when they joined in Confederation in 1867. The other provinces inaugurated their own systems when they joined, and free, tax-supported elementary schools were common across Canada by 1875. Secondary education was still reserved for the sons of gentlemen, however, and the subjects were limited to the classics and mathematics.

Upper-class boys in Ontario often went to prep schools with Anglican church connections. The Lord Bishop of Niagara is still the official visitor at Ridley College in St. Catharines, Ontario. In Quebec the Catholic *collèges classiques* taught future priests, notaries and doctors. In both provinces students were required to pass stiff entrance examinations.

By 1911 the average adult Canadian still had only eight years of schooling, but education was becoming more accessible. In some provinces new schools gave instruction in scientific agriculture, and others offered industrial and vocational training. The federal government began channeling money to the provinces in 1919.

The upheaval came after World War II. Birth rates and expectations rose together, and between 1950 and 1960 the number of youngsters between the ages of five and nineteen grew from 3.5 million

to 5.2 million. During the fifties and sixties royal commissions studied the systems in each of the provinces, and in three of them—Quebec, Newfoundland and Alberta—they recommended sweeping reforms.

In 1951 Parliament authorized unrestricted federal grants to the provinces for the support of universities, both public and private, and in 1966 the provincial governments were given complete control of the funds. By 1970 Canada ranked first in the world in government spending on post-secondary education.

Today more than thirty per cent of all Canadians are enrolled in some institution of education, over ninety-five per cent of those fifteen years old are in high school, and some twenty per cent of those between eighteen and twenty-four are attending advanced schools of one type or another.

The One-Room School House Is No More

The number of public, federal and private schools in the Atlantic Provinces has declined remarkably in recent years. In 1960-61 there were 4,481 in four provinces; in 1973-74 there were 1,986. Some one-room public schools were abandoned, others were merged. The number of federal and private schools was reduced when Indian pupils were integrated into the public school classes.



School at Moose Factory, Ontario, c. 1890.

Continuous Progress

In the western provinces (and to a significant degree in all of Canada) elementary and secondary schools are structured to emphasize "continuous progress."

Pupils are not graded and promoted (or held back) each year, and instruction is not confined to rigid schedules and regular and routine classrooms.

Saskatchewan was the first to merge grades into divisions. Division I includes all children who otherwise would be in grades one through three. Each child moves at his own best pace. At a given moment he might be ahead of the group in math or a bit behind in literature, without attracting uncomfortable attention in either case.

Textbooks

The first official textbooks in Canada, **The Irish Readers**, were introduced in Ontario in 1896.

Designed in London for use in Ireland, they were intended to reduce rebellion by stressing Old Testament virtues and British unity.

The texts were often admonitory:

*Then let me always watch my lips,
Lest I be struck to death and hell,
Since God a book of reckoning keeps
For every lie that children tell.*

In 1909 these were replaced by **The Ontario Readers**, which emphasized Canadian ties to England.

J.C. Middleton's poem "The Canadian" was included:

*I never saw the cliffs of snow,
The Channel billows tipped with cream,
The restless, eddying tides that flow
About the Island of my dream.*

*I never saw the English downs,
Upon an April Day.
The quiet, old Cathedral towns,
The hedgerows white with May.*

*And still the name of England,
Which tyrants laugh to scorn
Can thrill my soul. It is to me
A very bugle-horn.*

The Ontario Readers were dropped in 1937, and school authorities began selecting books from the general lists of North American publishers. This system led to the use of many books emphasizing United States history and frames of reference.

In recent years Canadian publishers have introduced competitive texts with a distinct, though often subtle, Canadian flavour.



Today education involves more than the 3 R's. These cooks are in school in Ottawa.



The Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific on Pedder Bay across from Victoria, British Columbia, is one of three United World Colleges; the others are in Wales and Singapore. Two hundred men and women from fifty-two countries attend the college, which is dedicated to the principle that education must be a source of unity and peace among peoples.

Financial Aid for Almost All

Both the federal and provincial governments give financial help to students. The federal government makes low-interest loans with repayment beginning six months after graduation. The provincial governments make loans and give direct grants which need not be repaid. Most provinces require that the grants be used to study in the province.

In both cases the aid is supplementary. The parents of students contribute as much as they can, and students are expected to pay part of their own way with their savings and summer earnings.

Tuition

Tuition payments by Canadian university students run between \$600 and \$1,200, substantially below those paid in the United States.

Room, board, textbooks, transportation and incidental costs are substantial, however, and the price of a university education totals between \$3,500 and \$5,500 a year.

This fall most students found that tuition had gone up. The University of Toronto, for example, (Canada's largest, with more than 45,000 students) raised tuition for liberal arts students, from \$710 to \$835.



The University of Calgary in Alberta is a provincial university with 10,000 full-time and 2,500 part-time undergraduate and graduate students.

To Know Ourselves

In 1972 the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada appointed a Commission on Canadian Studies.

Its four-volume report, entitled **To Know Ourselves**, created a considerable stir when it was released in 1976. It found, in the words of its chairman, T.H.B. Symons, president of Trent University, that "there is no area . . . in which a reasonable balance and attention is being given to Canadian matters. . . . There simply isn't a discipline in the country devoting an adequate proportion of time to teaching and research about the particular problems and circumstances of this society."

It recommended that universities and colleges establish major Canadian-oriented teaching and research programs and suggested that more emphasis on Canada be encouraged in existing courses. However, it rejected the use of a quota system that would require a certain amount of Canadian content.

Language and Religion

The Atlantic Provinces

In five provinces—Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and Newfoundland—separate public schools are maintained for Protestant or Catholic minorities.

The official view in Newfoundland is that all young men and women should be "possessed of a religious faith" and that the schoolroom is a proper place for religious instruction. Before consolidating in 1971, Newfoundland had three hundred denominational school boards. It now has thirty-five school districts—twelve Roman Catholic, twenty-one integrated Protestant, one Pentecostal and one Seventh Day Adventist. The churches are directly involved in school administration.

In some schools religion is taught through the first eleven grades, but there are many where it is taught only in a few grades, and others where it is not taught at all.

In the other Atlantic Provinces—New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island—the direct influence of churches is minimal. In certain districts in New Brunswick Catholic parents may have their children assigned to schools where the students are predominantly of that faith. It is an informal arrangement and is found only where population patterns make it practicable. Any religious instruction offered is available only outside regular school hours.



Carleton University in Ottawa. The university founded an Institute of Canadian Studies in 1957, which now offers a three-year B.A. program and an M.A.

Ontario

At Confederation Ontario had a single school system with separate Protestant and Catholic schools. The French-speaking Ontarians had schools in which French was the language of instruction, and it was not unusual to find schools taught in German or Gaelic.

In 1912 the Ontario government limited the use of French as the language of instruction to the first two years of school and required that all pupils study English. Schools whose teachers were not qualified to teach in English would lose their provincial grants. Later the law was modified to provide for a limited number of bilingual schools, but it was still vigorously resisted. French-speaking parents in Ottawa demonstrated against the law, and the Catholic Church said it would deny the sacraments to parents who sent their children to English-language public schools. Sympathetic Quebecers established a fund to help the Ontario schools which had lost their grants, and French speakers in Montreal boycotted goods manufactured by English firms.

After some twenty years of controversy, the government retreated and French-instruction schools were gradually restored.

Quebec

In Quebec the majority of children go to Catholic schools, while most of the rest, including children from Jewish, non-sectarian and atheistic families, go to schools administered by Protestant school boards.

Quebec has separate French and English schools as well as separate Catholic and Protestant ones. They are not the same, though they are often confused.

Protestant schools are almost always English-language schools, and French-language schools are almost always Catholic, but there are exceptions. The Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal has its *Bureau des écoles protestantes du Grand Montréal* administering several French-language institutions, including its *Ecole Secondaire de Roberval* (Roberval High). There are also a good many English-language Catholic schools on both the elementary and secondary levels.

French Immersion

In the last decade bilingual French immersion schools have proliferated.

The immersion programs were almost non-existent in 1970, but by 1979 there were 281 schools outside Quebec offering varieties of subjects in French to 26,000 English-speaking students. Ontario, which pioneered the concept of French immersion, had 160 with 15,042 students. New Brunswick had 35, British Columbia 24 and Manitoba 21.

Immersion programs vary from school to school. A typical one offers instruction totally in French from kindergarten through the first few grades, with the gradual introduction of courses in English as the children become more fluent in French, until an approximate balance of courses in the two languages is reached. In Ontario, for example, French is used seventy-five per cent of the time at the elementary level and sixty per cent at the secondary level.

Immersion presents problems of curriculum and teacher training, but the system appears to be working. The students have performed on achievement tests as well as their English-taught peers.

Quebec's Quiet Revolution

Quebec's system of education was traditionally controlled by Catholic teaching orders. Nuns taught in the elementary schools, Brothers in the upper schools for boys.

Higher education followed the European tra-



dition, with emphasis on Latin and Greek at the classical colleges and on law and medicine in the universities.

The province had no compulsory attendance laws until 1943.

The institutions of the province began to change drastically in the late 1950s, with the most spectacular changes occurring in the style of education and the role of the Church.

In 1960 the Liberal Premier Jean Lesage launched the "Quiet Revolution." In the spring of 1961 a Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education began operations; and after hearing witnesses, examining briefs, and visiting some fifty institutions, it recommended that school enrollments be greatly expanded. "Education is essential in a democratic society," it concluded, "and it must be equally accessible to all."

The response was extraordinary. The classical colleges were largely replaced by two- or three-year colleges called *Collèges d'enseignement général et professionnel*, and some were integrated into the public system as secondary schools. The CEGEPs offered two-year courses to those preparing for university, and three-year "terminal" courses in business administration, auto mechanics, secretarial sciences and other vocational fields.

In 1951 only 29.9 per cent of Quebecers had nine years of school; by 1971 more than 45 per cent had.

In 1961 some 74 per cent of 15-year-olds and 7.3 per cent of those age 20 were in school. Ten years later 91 per cent of the 15-year-olds and 12.4 per cent of the 20-year-olds were under instruction.

In its 1976 survey of education in Canada, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development said that in Quebec, "it is already possible to speak of an almost complete accessibility of educational opportunity regardless of the student's geographical location."

In 1961, according to the Economic Council of Canada, Anglophones in Quebec earned fifty-one per cent more than Francophones. By 1977 the disparity was down to fifteen per cent. In 1961 only forty-four per cent of the persons in the top fifteen per cent bracket of income-earners were Francophones; by 1977 the percentage of Francophones had climbed to seventy per cent, and it is still rising.

Once a gifted French-speaking young man aspired to be a priest, a doctor or a lawyer. (Gifted young women had narrower options.) Today Quebec has one-third of all business students in the country, and the University of Montreal has more qualified business applicants than it can readily enroll.

Francophones have also gained access to the traditional English-language schools, such as McGill University in Montreal. According to Dr. E.J. Stanbury, vice-principal of planning at McGill, the number of French-speaking undergraduates has increased four per cent in two years, and they now represent twenty per cent of the full-time undergraduate enrollment.

A Loud Voice in Quebec's Revolution

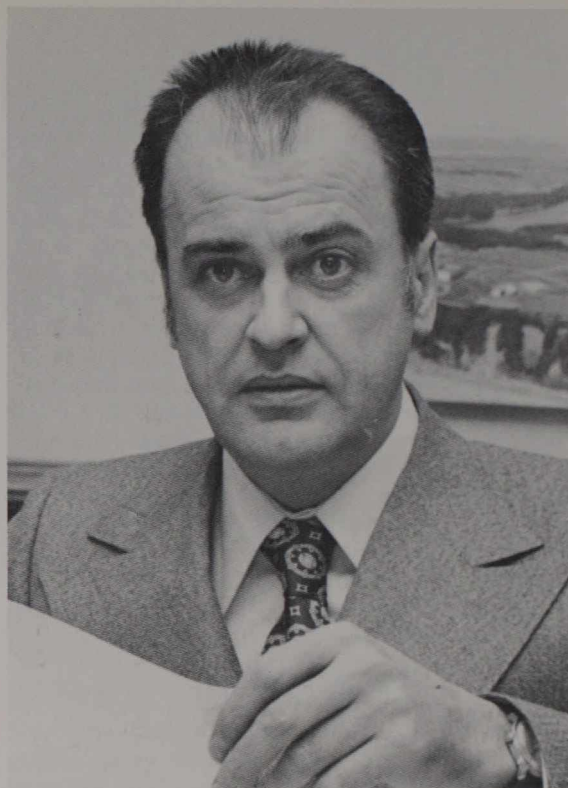
Today Jean-Paul Desbiens is the Provincial of the Frères Maristes, in the town of Desbiens on Lac Saint-Jean in Quebec. (The Provincial is the head of a religious order in an entire province.)

Twenty years ago he was *Frère Untel*, Brother Anonymous, the author of caustic essays attacking the established structure of Quebec education.

Desbiens, then a teaching brother in a *collège classique*, was inspired by a column by André Laurendeau in *Le Devoir*, Montreal's most influential newspaper. Laurendeau criticized the sloppy French spoken by most young people, and gave it the name "joul," a common mispronunciation of *cheval* (horse).

Desbiens wrote Laurendeau a letter, and the columnist ran it over the signature *Frère Untel*.

It was the first of a series of Desbiens' essays that ran in *Le Devoir* and were then collected in a book, *Les Insolences du Frère Untel (The Impertinences of Brother Anonymous)*. The *Impertinences* were soon being compared with the writings of Molière, Heinrich Heine, and even Rabelais. They came at an auspicious moment—the "Quiet Revolution" was underway and *Frère Untel* would play a rollicking role in the process.



Jean-Paul Desbiens

Impertinences

Below is an excerpt from *Frère Untel's* first essay.

The Language of Defeat

Our pupils talk joul, write joul, and don't want to talk or write any other way. . . . Joul is a boneless language. The consonants are all slurred, a little like the speech of Hawaiian dancers, according to the records I have heard. Oula-oula-oula-oula-oula-alao. They say chu pas apable for je ne suis pas capable. [I am not able.] I can't write joul down phonetically. It can't be fixed in writing for it is a decomposition, and only Edgar Poe could fix a decomposition. You know the story where he tells of the hypnotist who succeeded in freezing the decomposition of a corpse—it's a wonderful horror story.

Postscript

Jean-Paul Desbiens is pleased with the changes in Quebec. In a recent interview he told CANADA TODAY/D'AUJOURD'HUI: "For one thing the youngsters speak better French. It has very much improved, partly because of the influence of television, particularly the example of the sports reporters who speak well and to whom the youngsters pay great attention. There is also a new sense of pride in being what they are.

"More fundamentally, higher and more comprehensive education is now available to many more. So great a venture has its miseries, but on the whole it has been positive, interesting and dynamic."

The Odds

A young American is more likely to go to college than a young Canadian. The comparison is not precise, however, since the various modes of post-secondary education in the two countries are not the same.

Still, 23.6 per cent of Americans between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four are in college of one type or another. Of Canadians in the same age group, 19.6 per cent are in some type of post-secondary education, including 12 per cent in universities.

Student Exchange

In 1979, 3,970 full-time undergraduates and 1,838 part-time undergraduates from the United States were studying in Canada as well as 2,283 full-time and 886 part-time graduate students. In 1979, 5,099 Canadian citizens received student visas from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. (This figure was down substantially from the 9,151 who registered during 1978.)

A Contrast of Students

(Northrop Frye, critic and author, Professor of the University of Toronto, was a Visiting Professor at Harvard in 1975.)

American students are much more frank in talking about their personal problems. Americans also ask me about my own personal views or beliefs—political or religious beliefs—much more freely. Canadians are shy and more reserved.

I have a great affection for American students, but young people who have been conditioned from infancy as citizens of a great world power are not the same people as young Canadians.

Vigilance Is a Vital Word

Canadians have often been distressed to find that their children—under the influence of American books, magazines and television shows—often use American frames of reference, adopt American expressions and are sometimes more knowledgeable about American history than about the history of Canada.

The **Canadian Dictionary for Children** is a Canadianized version of the **Macmillan Dictionary for Children**, which is published in the United States.

The Canadian publisher, Collier Macmillan, has industriously changed spellings and added and deleted items to reflect a Canadian point of view. Some forty per cent of the original 724 pages were altered. Spelling changes include *color* to *colour*, *theater* to *theatre*, *ameba* to *amoeba*, *whiskey* to



Northrop Frye

whisky, meter to metre and Halloween to Hallowe'en.

Pronunciations went from *Kil-LOM-eter* to *KILL-oh-meter*, from *KACKkey* to *KAR-key*, *LOO-tenant* to *LEF-tenant* and *PRAH-cess* to *PROH-cess*. Entries on New York, New Jersey and other states were eliminated, and ones on New Zealand (a fellow member of the British Commonwealth) and Newfoundland were added. New words include *micmac*, a small canoe; *anorak*, a waterproof animal-skin parka; *mukluk*, an animal-skin boot; and *cariole*, a light sleigh pulled by dogs or horses.

On a picture accompanying the word *dirigible*, the tiny USA marking was removed, and for *salute*, a drawing of a saluting mountie was substituted for that of a U.S. sailor.

Leacock on Higher Education

If I were founding a university—and I say it with all the seriousness of which I am capable—I would found first a smoking room; then when I had a little more money in hand I would found a dormitory; then after that, or more probably with it, a decent reading room and a library. After that, if I still had money over that I couldn't use, I would hire a professor and get some text books.

Stephen Leacock,
My Discovery of England.





Canada's school systems are adjusting to falling enrollments as the post-war baby boom comes to an end.

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