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Education, Inspection and State Formation: A Preliminary Statement

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Article abstract

This paper attempts to draw the attention of sociologists and historians of education to the matter of the form of public schooling. A review of competing models of educational development current in the literature shows that neither pays attention to public schooling as a form of state provided and regulated schooling. Current models thus neglect the implication of schooling in the organization of patterns of government. The article argues that public schooling came to be normalized as what education really was (or should be). To pursue this argument it investigates the inspective function as one of the key processes whereby public schooling was administered into dominance. While the discussion centres on North American experience, English material is also discussed in an effort to locate the construction of the educational state in its broader context.

Education, Inspection and State Formation: A Preliminary Statement*

PHILIP CORRIGAN and BRUCE CURTIS

Résumé

This paper attempts to draw the attention of sociologists and historians of education to the matter of the form of public schooling. *A review of competing models of educational development current in the literature shows that neither pays attention to public schooling as a form of state provided and regulated schooling. Current models thus neglect the implication of schooling in the organization of patterns of government. The article argues that public schooling came to be normalized as what education really was (or should be). To pursue this argument it investigates the inspective function as one of the key processes whereby public schooling was administered into dominance. While the discussion centres on North American experience, English material is also discussed in an effort to locate the construction of the educational state in its broader context.*

* * * *

Le présent travail tente d'attirer l'attention des sociologues et des historiens de l'éducation sur la question de la forme de l'instruction publique. *Une revue des autres modèles de développement de l'enseignement que l'on retrouve couramment dans les écrits sur ces questions démontre qu'aucun d'entre eux ne s'intéresse à l'instruction publique comme une forme de scolarisation dispensée et réglementée par l'État. Par conséquent, les modèles courants négligent le rôle de la scolarisation dans l'organisation des modes de gouvernement. Ce travail soutient que l'instruction publique est devenue la norme de ce qu'est (ou doit être) véritablement l'éducation. À l'appui de cet argument, on y examine comment la "fonction d'inspecteur" a été l'un des moyens fondamentaux par lesquels on a imposé administrativement la domination de l'instruction publique. Si la discussion porte principalement sur l'expérience Nord-Américaine, on étudie aussi des documents d'origine anglaise dans le but de situer dans un contexte plus vaste l'établissement de l'État éducateur.*

INTRODUCTION

Since the middle 1960s, historians and sociologists have shown a renewed interest in the origins and social role of educational institutions in North America. This interest

*Bruce Curtis acknowledges the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for his contribution to this paper, which is a preliminary statement of joint research conducted since 1983 and recently formalized as the State Formation Project. The project investigates state formation in the Canadas from the 1840s to the 1880s, with particular attention to the construction of the "educational state" and the formation of the "public" where that state rules.

has been guided for the most part by two largely opposed theoretical models. We call these models "impositionist" and "voluntaryist." It is our contention that debate over the development and political character of public education has tended to place an undue emphasis upon the *mechanisms* of educational change. Writers following either model have been primarily concerned with such questions as the elaboration and diffusion of educational reform ideologies, the support for educational reform at different levels of government, and with the question of the motives of educational reformers. Interesting as these issues may be, we suggest that an exclusive concentration upon them tends to obscure prior questions about the location of the public educational project in more general processes of state formation. Answers to these questions are to be found in studies of schooling practices understood as a set of political relations.

The concern with questions such as whether or not educational institutions were popular is based on the assumption that "everyone knows" what public education is "really about." In this article, we attempt to call into question this "taken-for-granted" character of public education. We begin with a general outline of impositionist and voluntaryist models of educational development. We regard each of these models as valuable in emphasizing aspects of the developmental process, but as both equally flawed in their relative insensitivity to public education as a *definite social form* of education and in their failure to appreciate public education — whoever wanted it or did not want it — as a *structure of political power*. We then highlight the governmental instrument of *inspection* as illustrating the new political structures implicit in public education.

THE IMPOSITIONIST MODEL

The impositionist model of educational development has been most directly associated in North America with the early work of Michael Katz[1] and with later work by Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis.[2] Particularly in his *The Irony of Early School Reform* (1968), Katz questioned the prevailing assumption that educational reform in midnineteenth century America represented a democratic triumph for the mass of the population, led by middle-class reformers, over the selfish interests of an elite minority. Through an examination of the ideology of middle-class reformers, Katz revealed that public educational reform was itself an interested project, in which moral disciplinary elements occupied a central place. In design, at least, public educational institutions were to habituate the developing working class to the conditions of industrial capitalist production: punctuality, regularity, uniformity of effort at alien activity and respect for property. Katz argued that the ideology of educational reform was a

1. M. B. Katz, *The Irony of Early School Reform* (Boston, 1968); "Education and Social Development in the Nineteenth Century", in *History and Education*, ed. P. Nash (New York, 1970), pp. 83–114; *Class, Bureaucracy and Schools* (New York, 1971); *The People of Hamilton, Canada West* (Cambridge, 1975); and the weak *mea culpa*, "The Origins of Public Education: A Reassessment," *History of Education Quarterly* (Winter 1976), pp. 381–407.
2. Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America* (New York, 1976).

class ideology. On the basis of rather questionable empirical evidence — a vote over a high school in one Massachusetts town in the 1860s — Katz argued that workers opposed educational reform. Educational institutions were seen as an imposition.[3]

While critics of Katz have often focused on the apparently simple factual matter of popular support for educational reform, we would suggest that the important thrust of Katz' work lay elsewhere. Katz developed an insight germinal to the revisionist social history of education generally, an insight which was first articulated by Bernard Bailyn.[4] In *Education in the Forming of American Society* (1960), Bailyn emphasized that the organization of public educational institutions constituted a radical departure from prior educational organization. He related the appearance of public education to the growth of wage labour at the expense of domestic production and to the differentiation of the state from civil society.[5] Katz, in turn, emphasized that public educational institutions triumphed in Massachusetts only at the expense of a preexisting educational organization. In other words, public education was only one kind or form of educational activity amongst many.[6] This insight encouraged some early contributors to the debate to investigate the existence of alternatives to state education.

In an early article, "Elementary Education in Upper Canada: A Reassessment," Robert Gidney investigated the extent of local educational organization in Upper Canada before the public educational reforms of the 1840s and 1850s. Gidney argued that a network of local schools existed before 1840 which was probably capable of providing basic skills of literacy to the mass of the population. These schools were largely beyond the control and influence of the state. Gidney pointed out that state schooling in the 1840s and 1850s "first undermined and then destroyed the traditional character of Upper Canadian educational provision."[7] After the consolidation of the public educational system, the meaning of these locally controlled and funded schools changed. "Private" schooling came to be contrasted to "public" schooling, as a more or less conscious rejection of the educational activities of the state.

Again, Susan Houston's early work demonstrated forcefully the connection between political organization and educational reform.[8] Alison Prentice's *The School Promoters* (1977) systematized reform ideology in the case of Upper Canada, and emphasized the connection between educational reform and the moral reconstruction of the population. Prentice has also directly posed the questions of gender and of the

3. M. B. Katz, *The Irony of Early School Reform* (Boston, 1968), p. 86.
4. Bernard Bailyn, *Education in the Forming of American Society* (New York, 1960).
5. Ibid., pp. 21–36.
6. This exciting dimension of the work of Katz was largely buried under the debate over "imposition."
7. Robert Gidney, "Elementary Education in Upper Canada: A Reassessment," in *Education and Social Change*, eds. M. B. Katz and P. H. Mattingly (New York, 1975), pp. 3–26.
8. Especially Susan Houston, "Politics, Schools and Social Change in Upper Canada," in ibid., pp. 28–56.

role of teachers in state schooling.[9] Many other contributors to the debate whom we might categorize as revisionists or impositionists emphasized in different ways the historically specific character of public education. Ian Davey's exploration of the temporal variation in structures of work and schooling, for instance, speaks to public education as a form of education aimed at a fundamental alteration of patterns of social life.[10] We would suggest that this line of enquiry has tended to be lost in the debates over the mechanisms of educational reform.

In part the direction taken by impositionist writers was influenced by the publication in 1976 of Bowles and Gintis' *Schooling in Capitalist America*. Bowles and Gintis were primarily concerned with the role of public educational institutions in the reproduction of capitalist relations of production. They demonstrated that public education as such functioned to solidify and elaborate a class structure characterized by what they saw as relations of control and domination. Schooling for the masses, they argued, functioned to inculcate habits and forms congenial to exploitive class relations. They argued that a class interest in securing and extending these economic relations had guided the initial organization of public education, and drew their authority for this position from the work of Katz.[11]

Bowles and Gintis' work tended to reorient the debate over educational reform in a direction which we consider to be unfortunate in many respects. While we accept that the discourse of Marxism is particularly useful in understanding educational organization, the educational views of Bowles and Gintis are quite limited. While Bowles and Gintis emphasized that educational development may usefully be periodized according to stages of capitalist development, their overwhelming concentration on the economic contribution of schooling directs attention away from public education as such. The politics of education in terms both of internal relations in schools (e.g. between teachers and students) and of the place of schooling in processes of state building (e.g. of public *construction*) tends to be subordinated to the economics of education.

Impositionist writers initially tended to ignore the activities of "imposed upon" populations. The discovery that educational reformers articulated quite explicit disciplinary discourses encouraged research into reform ideology. Many early revisionist writers had imperfect notions of social class, and tended to treat educational reform as simply about "control" of some social groups, or as about the control of "social problems," such as crime and vice. The attack of voluntaryist writers on the impositionist model focused particularly on the economic functions of education, and upon the

9. Alison Prentice, *The School Promoters* (Toronto, 1977); "The Feminization of Teaching in British North America, 1845–1875," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 8 (May 1975), pp. 5–20. Also Marta Danylewycz, Beth Light and Alison Prentice, "The Evolution of the Sexual Division of Labour in Teaching," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 16 (mai 1983) pp. 81–109.

10. Ian Davey, "School Reform and School Attendance: The Hamilton Central School, 1853–1861," in *Education and Social Change*, pp. 294–314.

11. *Schooling in Capitalist America* pp. 154–79.

extent to which education was in fact imposed on localities. While Prentice,[12] for instance, continues to focus on the history of teachers and teaching, and upon the spread of educational technology, anglophone educational historiography has largely moved away from a focus on educational alternatives.[13]

It is important to note that English educational historiography differs from its North American counterpart in the presence in the former of a strong and durable strain of "history from below." While a view of education as a "Good Thing," much akin to that common to prerevisionist writing in North America, prevailed in England until the 1970s, more attention was paid there to the specific *form* of education, to the educational activities of the labour movement and, more recently, to the education of working class girls.[14] As well, the "new sociology of education"[15] of the early 1970s led to a series of critical enquiries into questions such as the management of knowledge by the state through schooling. In North America, however, by the middle 1970s most educational historians had come to accept some model of reform by imposition.

THE VOLUNTARIST CRITIQUE

In the later 1970s and early 1980s, a number of North American scholars engaged in detailed empirical testing and criticism of the impositionist model. Some of these

12. See the early fruits of Prentice's collaboration with the late Marta Danylewycz, "Teachers, Gender and Bureaucratizing Schools Systems in Nineteenth Century Montreal and Toronto," *History of Education Quarterly* 24 (Spring, 1984); "Teachers' Work: Changing Patterns and Perceptions in the Emerging School Systems of Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Canada," *Labour/Le Travail* (forthcoming); "Themes in the History of the Women Teachers' Association of Toronto, 1892–1914," in *Women's Paid and Unpaid Work*, ed. Paula Bourne (Toronto, forthcoming).

13. We do not presume to speak to the francophone literature.

14. After the pioneering work of Brian Simon, begun with *The Two Nations and The Educational Structure, 1780–1870* (London, 1960), English debate was particularly influenced by Richard Johnson's "Educational policy and social control in early Victorian England," *Past and Present* 49 (1970), pp. 96–119. Particularly important is his discussion "Elementary Education" in *Guides to 19th century Parliamentary Publications: Education*, eds. P. and S. Ford (Dublin, 1977), pp. 5–67. There is now an extensive thematic literature in England, including G. Sutherland, *Policy-making in elementary education, 1870–1895* (Oxford, 1973). On the labour movement, see the survey by H. Silver, "Education and the Labour Movement," *History of Education* 2 (1973). Subsequent developments may be traced through the *Bulletin for the Society of the Study of Labour History* and *History Workshop Journal*. Particularly important is P. Gardner, *Lost Elementary Schools of Victorian England* (London, 1984). On gender see J. Purvis, "The double burden of class and gender in the schooling of working class girls in 19th century England," in *Schools, teachers, teaching*, eds. S. Barton and S. Walker (London, 1981); A. Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood," *History Workshop Journal* 5 (1978); "Mind you do as you're told: Reading Books for Board School Girls, 1870–1902," *Feminist Review* 3 (1979). In *The Tidy House* (London, 1982), Carolyn Steedman relates a current form of elementary education for girls to its historical genealogy.

15. For a conspectus of the range of developments here, see B. Bernstein, "The sociology of education," and "Aspects of the relations between education and production," in *Class, Codes and Control* III (London, 1977).

writers accepted a class analysis of educational development, but argued that the impositionist model ignored working-class activity, or presented faulty conceptions of social class.[16] Of more concern to us at the moment is another body of critical literature which came to argue that educational reform was unproblematically a "Good Thing," which had attracted the voluntary support of the North American population in general.

Local educational history by Tyack,[17] Myer et al,[18] Kaestle and Vinovskis,[19] reviews of the literature by Craig,[20] and Collins,[21] and more general social history by Kaestle[22] maintained a view of educational reform as a process which attracted broad support in the locality, and to which no significant resistance existed. In the Canadian literature, and from a somewhat different perspective, Gidney and Lawr[23] argued that local popular demand led central policy initiatives, and that the latter succeeded only where they in fact accorded with local interest.

The voluntaryist critique centered upon a very limited range of the propositions and insights generated by the early impositionist writers. Most debate and research focused on the popularity of educational reform and upon the connection between schooling and capitalism narrowly conceived. Kaestle and Vinovskis, for instance, reexamined the activities of artisanal workers in an effort to determine whether or not educational reform was a welcome process.[24] Tyack and Meyer et al sought to estimate the extent to which public educational reform could be seen as an imposition on localities by examining the ideology of school reform promoted by local educational leaders.[25] None of these writers examined what went on in schools, how schooling by

16. For instance, Julia Wrigley, *Class, Politics and Public Schools: Chicago, 1900–1950* (New Brunswick, 1982).
17. David Tyack, "Ways of Seeing: An Essay on the History of Compulsory Schooling," *Harvard Educational Review* 46 (1976), pp. 355–89.
18. John Meyer et al. "Public Education as Nation-Building in America: Enrollments and Bureaucratization in the American States, 1870–1930," *American Journal of Sociology* 85 (1979), pp. 591–613.
19. Carl Kaestle and Maris Vinovskis, *Education and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century Massachusetts* (Cambridge, 1980).
20. John E. Craig, "The Expansion of Education," *Review of Research in Education* 9 (1981), pp. 152–213.
21. Randall Collins, "Some Comparative Principles of Educational Stratification," *Harvard Educational Review* (February 1977), pp. 1–27.
22. Carl Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780–1860* (New York, 1983).
23. Robert Gidney and D. A. Lawr, "Egerton Ryerson and the Origins of the Ontario Secondary School," *Canadian Historical Review* 60 (1979), pp. 442–65; "Who Ran the Schools? Local Influence on Education Policy in Nineteenth-Century Ontario," *Ontario History* 62 (1980), pp. 131–43; "Bureaucracy vs Community? The Origins of Bureaucratic Procedure in the Upper Canadian School System," *Journal of Social History* 13 (1980), pp. 438–57. These three arguments in particular deserve careful study.
24. Kaestle and Vinovskis, *Education and Social Change*, pp. 167–75.
25. David Tyack, "The Spread of Public Schooling in Victorian America: In Search of a Reinterpretation," *History of Education* (1977), p. 174; Meyer et al, "Education as Nation-building," p. 592.

the state altered preexisting educational patterns, or what proletarian or transitional classes did about schooling. They remained trapped in that feeble conception of the early impositionist writers in which capitalism is defined as factory production in cities. At times they used this conceptual manoeuvre to suggest that since there were rural schools but not rural factories, schooling was not connected to capitalism![26]

Of more general interest to us is an assumption which appears both in the work of American voluntaryist writers, and in the work of Gidney and Lawr. This assumption, taken from the initial impositionist approach, proposes that public educational organization is to be evaluated by public reaction to it. Katz, as we have seen, argued that public education was in some way problematic because it was imposed on reluctant working classes. Later writers, like Prentice and Houston, accepted that public education was in fact about control. Voluntaryist critics responded that public education was basically a "good thing," and the evidence of this lay in its popularity and acceptance by local educational leaders.

We suggest that there are two difficulties which may result from the assumption that public education can be evaluated by measuring public reaction to it. The first of these has to do with what evidence one looks at in evaluating reactions to public education. The second has to do with the proposition that public education (or any social structure) can be evaluated by looking at people's reactions to it.

If one evaluates reaction to the schooling of the population by the state through an investigation of public activities alone, one may easily be led to ignore, overlook or discount what people actually do in the schoolroom and its vicinity. Relatively little public opposition to state schooling existed in North America after the middle of the nineteenth century. Most visible public figures and groups (trade unions often included) supported public schooling as such, although debates did rage about the particular details of educational management. However, schools were burned and vandalized, parents assaulted teachers in the schoolroom and its vicinity, students opposed the order of the school in myriad ways, and schoolroom brawls were common.[27] Most educational jurisdictions passed and enforced compulsory attendance regulations, and in most jurisdictions some version of a law against "school disturbers" like that passed in Canada West in 1852 obtained.[28] As Chad Gaffield recently remarked, opposition to state schooling can be uncovered only if we in fact look for it.[29] Public opposition, we argue, must be distinguished from popular opposition. The

26. Kaestle and Vinovskis, *Education and Social Change*, ch. 6.
27. This material is documented in B. Curtis, "Contestation in Pedagogical Space: Canada West, 1850–1871," unpublished paper, Department of History and Philosophy, OISE (1985). It will form a chapter in Curtis' *Building the Educational State in Canada West, 1836–1871* (in draft).
28. An Act Supplementary to the Common School Act of Upper Canada (16 Vic., c.185), s. XIX.
29. Chad Gaffield, "Going Back to School: Towards a Fresh Agenda for the History of Education," unpublished paper, Canadian Historical Association Annual Meeting, Montreal, 1985.

groups capable of speaking in the public domain were, on the whole, those charged with managing the system and those interested in promoting public education. The population targeted for treatment by the state in schools did not for the most part speak in this domain. The massive educational correspondence of the Education Office for Canada West in the period 1842–71, for instance, contains perhaps a dozen letters from students out of several tens of thousands of items.[30] Students and uncaring parents did not make remarks to county school conventions which were then reproduced in public print. This domain heard only a select chorus of voices. If we wish to learn what people generally thought, felt and did about state schooling, we must look to the schoolroom itself, and here resistance and opposition were persistent.[31]

However, there is another issue here which is not simply a question of replacing one sort of *evidence* with another. We do not wish simply to suggest that *one* set of reactions is what we should really be looking at. We think that approaching the process of educational development as if individual or collective reactions to that process alone can inform our understanding of it, is inadequate. Such an approach neglects the question of educational *form* which we think was the particularly significant insight contained in the original impositionist model.

Historians of education like other historians, we would argue, typically evaluate institutions in terms of how people react to them, rather than in terms of what they are. It is hard to see this, because it threatens to call into question the empirical models historians employ. Attempts to point it out are often greeted with the cry of "abstraction" or of "idle theorizing." Yet even David Tyack has pointed out that the debate over educational development has been hindered by an inattention on the part

30. The question of the manner in which the knowledge available to historians of Canada West in this very rich body of correspondence was framed is itself central. It points to one dimension of the problem we raise here: social forms and official practices precisely shape the evidence available to us. Correspondents to the Education Office were counselled to write only in a particular standardized manner, with the construction of the letter specified. Those who didn't do so were easily disregarded. One of the rare letters from a student to the Education Office is Archives of Ontario (AO), Education Records, RG2, Incoming General Correspondence, C-6-C, E. Travers, Bracebridge, to Education Office, September 1870, no. 6744. The letter criticizes the proposed amendments to the School Act which anticipated compulsory attendance. Across its face the departmental clerk has scrawled "no reply."

31. In the English literature there are ample resources to show the extent and theoretical, political and historiographic significance of popular opposition. The statement of Jack Common, the son of a railway engine driver of Newcastle-upon-Tyne is apposite:

> School, which is the Council school, is in origin quite alien to working-class life. It does not grow from that life; it is not "our school" in the sense that other schools can be spoken of by the folk of other classes. The government forced them on us.... School in working class life expresses nothing of that life; it is an institution clapped on from above.

J. Common, *Freedom of the Streets* (London, 1938), pp. 60–1. See also Stephen Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels?* (Oxford, 1982) and for a later period, R. White and D. Brockington, eds. *Tales out of School: consumers' views of education* (London, 1983).

of participants to theoretical models.[32] We suggest that we can understand public education more completely by examining it as a particular social form of education.

State schooling was a particular *form* of education. As Gidney has pointed out, its triumph took place at the expense of other possible educational forms: self-education, adult education, apprenticeship education, sectarian education, or private schooling for the middle classes. The process of educational reform is in part a process whereby this one educational form comes to acquire a monopoly over educational provision, to be seen as *the only possible* educational form.[33] State schooling in the nineteenth century came increasingly to be identified with education in general through the invalidation of earlier forms and alternative forms. This is true, we suggest, whatever people may have thought or felt about this process. Education in thought and reality in North America came increasingly to be the schooling of the population by the state. This form of education contained its own structure of powerfulness. It is the powerfulness of state education to which we wish to attend in the rest of our article.

THE INSPECTIVE FUNCTION

Of course, other writers on the history of educational development in North America have noted that educational reform was about political power. However, voluntarist writers in particular tend to underplay the significance of new forms of educational power. Consider the governmental instrument of inspection which is embodied in most North American educational jurisdictions by 1850. Most jurisdictions undertook to appoint officials — variously known as visitors, superintendents, commissioners, overseers or inspectors — who were charged with investigating the conduct of local schooling and with verifying the extent to which local educational provisions corresponded to the political ideals guiding its administration. Kaestle writes in this regard,

> State superintendents were more like preachers than bureaucrats. They travelled about their states, visiting schools, giving speeches, organizing teachers' institutes, gathering data, and spreading the common-school reform gospel. Some of them wanted more coercive authority, and they worked to create a rough hierarchy of professional supervision but *their regulatory power was more form than substance*.[34]

We think that state power has been largely misconceived in this representative quotation. Educational historians in North America have tended, implicitly at least, to conceive of the power of the state as coercive authority. The model of power at work is one which is probably inspired by modern policing with its repertoire of guns, sticks,

32. Tyack, "Ways of Seeing," p. 389.
33. The question of form is central to our prior work. See B. Curtis, "Preconditions of the Canadian State: Educational Reform and the Construction of a Public in Upper Canada, 1837–1846," *Studies in Political Economy* 10 (Winter 1983), pp. 99–121; P. Corrigan, "In/forming schooling," in *Critical Pedagogy and Cultural Power*, ed. D. Livingstone (forthcoming 1986); P. Corrigan and D. Sayer, *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution* (Oxford, 1985).
34. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, p. 115; emphasis ours.

handcuffs and the capacity for direct physical violence — in Lenin's infamous phrase, "bodies of armed men, prisons, gaols." Where the means of violence are not directly present, as in schooling (except for the strap) it is assumed that power is equally absent. What happens in school units must then be voluntary activity.

In *Discipline and Punish,*[35] Michel Foucault points to another form of power which he argues is much more characteristic of the modern state: panopticism. The term comes from the circular prison designed by Jeremy Bentham and known as the panopticon, in which inmates in backlit cells are arranged around a central, glass-walled tower. In this "perfect machine of power," inmates were constantly visible to guardians in the central tower, while the latter were at the same time invisible. The state of permanent visibility in the panopticon was to lead inmates to scrutinize their own behaviour and to internalize the standards of guardians. Visibility was to create in the inmate a sense of vulnerability to power and, centrally, since the inmate could not actually see into the central tower — could not tell when it was in fact being observed — the sense of vulnerability was to become both general and abstract. While prisons were backed ultimately by the state's monopoly over the means of violence, where panopticism was successful, political rule by the state became selfgovernment.[36]

As a more general political form, panopticism allowed central authority to transform local sites or agencies into objects of investigation. Knowledge and power are closely related in panoptic systems. The process of scrutiny is possible because mechanisms exist for making local activities visible, and scrutiny produces knowledge which accumulates at the centre of authority. This knowledge allows the centre to monitor local provision, but also to manoeuvre in administrative processes. The scrutiny of local provision, for instance, may reveal solutions in the locality to general system problems, which the centre may then generalize. Scrutiny may allow for the uncovering of attempts by localities to counterorganize or contravene principles of system organization.

We wish to point to the inspective function as a key means whereby public educational reform in North America embodied new and important political relations between central educational authorities and local school units. Whatever they were called, by the middle of the nineteenth century educational authorities had come to employ a body of officials whose functions were to visit local sites of provision and to investigate the activities conducted there. Granting access to the local site for these officials was commonly a condition of central finance. Inspectors were usually empowered to collect information not only through the gathering of statistics kept by teachers and others, but also through direct activity in the local site. School superintendents in Canada West, for instance, were empowered to question classes in schools and to advise teachers as to the conduct of their lessons.[37] But, we suggest, the

35. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York, 1977).
36. Ibid., pp. 195–228.
37. AO, RG2 C-6-C, John Howee, teacher, Pelham Township, to Education Office, 12 March 1858; AO, RG2, Outgoing General Correspondence, C-1 Letterbook X, Ryerson to J. Brockbill, Superintendent, Pelham, 26 March 1858; C-6-C, J. Brockbill, Superintendent, Pelham, to Education Office, 29 March 1858.

inspective function should not be narrowly conceived. Inspectors in specific domains often carried out duties which were very broadly defined. English school inspectors, for instance, were commonly charged with investigating the general state of the population in the industrial districts. School inspection here involved the collection of information about living conditions, labour organization, and the existence of socialist propaganda.[38] In Canada West, school inspectors investigated private subscription libraries, documenting books and readership. They were frequently asked by the central authority to investigate and account for problematic aspects of school administration — the causes of nonattendance, for instance.[39] They were encouraged to articulate plans for educational improvement.

The knowledge they gathered was powerful knowledge and not simply a neutral rendering of the facts. The knowledge collected by inspectors was framed by and implicated in the administrative activity of the central office. Its collection aided the central authority in applying administrative pressure on local school units in an effort to force them to comply with state policy. Horace Mann, for instance, regularly published ranked lists of district school expenditure in an effort to shame local authorities into more closely following his educational prescriptions.[40] In Canada West, through the mechanism of inspection and through other knowledge-gathering activities, the Education Office learned of and acted against such practices as using unapproved texts, hiring unqualified teachers, and keeping more than one school in a section.[41] Knowledge-gathering mechanisms allowed disgruntled local residents to report illegal practices, and in some instances turned local resistance to schooling into a force of police for the central authority.[42]

Inspection was a powerful device, but its power was not a police power in the modern sense. Inspectors were agents of police in an earlier sense of the term. Like bridges and roads, inspectors contributed directly to the maintenance of order. Their

38. This is well brought out in E. P. Hennock, "Central/Local government relations in England: an outline, 1800–1850," in *Urban History Yearbook* (1982), and in A. J. Cullen, *The statistical movement in early modern Britain* (London, 1975). For studies of particular inspectors which clarify the same point, see R. K. Webb, "A Whig Inspector," *Journal of Modern History* 27 (1955); E. L. and O. P. Edmonds, "Hugh Seymour Tremenheere . . .," *British Journal of Educational Studies* 12 (1963); and P. R. D. Corrigan, "State Formation and Moral Regulation in Nineteenth Century Britain," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Durham, 1977. For contemporary remarks about the inspective function, see J. Fletcher, *Education: National, Voluntary and Free* (London, 1851), p. 33; J. P. Kay-Shuttleworth, *Public Education as Affected by the Minutes* (London, 1853), p. 56.

39. AO, RG2 C-6-C, John Flood, Local Superintendent, Dunn, to Education Office, 26 January 1860: "What are the causes of non-attendance . . . ."

40. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, p. 169.

41. For instance, AO, RG2, Draft Outgoing Correspondence, C-2, Ryerson to Rev. Robert Torrance, Secretary, Board of School Trustees, Guelph, 15 April 1859; this is one of the many letters of the type: "it has come to my attention" – that the board was using unauthorized books and risked losing the grant.

42. For instance, AO, RG2 C-6-C, John McIntyre, S.S. No. 5 Bagot, to Education Office, 18 January 1858.

power was in no simple way coercive. It was rather moral/regulatory. In part what was in question was the moral/political character of inspectors as individuals.

In the English case, as Philip Corrigan has shown elsewhere, inspectors were figures of national importance. Their social position was one which allowed them to communicate directly with the leading members of the English ruling class. Their reports and opinions on subjects both within and beyond their professional compass were published in the national and regional presses. They were often — as in the cases of Sir J. P. Kay-Shuttleworth, H. S. Tremenheere and Mathew Arnold — regarded as leading intellectuals. Their social prestige guaranteed them local influence.[43]

In the Canadian case, inspectors of schools were not generally individuals of national importance, not least because of the colonial status of the Canadas. However, they were solidly respectable members of local or regional elites. William Hutton of Victoria — justice, warden and gentleman-farmer as well as superintendent of common schools — was one such individual,[44] and other examples may be found in the persons of Dexter D'Everado, Hamnett Pinhey and Patrick Thornton. Between 1850 and 1871, the inspectors appointed by township councils were often clergymen or doctors. These individuals often enjoyed local moral prestige and possessed knowledge of local social conditions.[45]

Before 1850 in Canada West, the qualifications of inspectors were moral/political and not a technical expertise. They were appointed for their moral worth, and their power in the locality revolved around moral matters. Inspectors were empowered, for instance, to suspend the certificates of teachers found guilty of moral dereliction, the criteria for the determination of which were left to inspectors themselves. They were explicitly debarred from judging the competence of the teacher as pedagogue, but enjoined to scrutinize the comportment and habits of the teacher closely.[46]

The politics of educational organization in Canada West was also notorious for the institution of school visitors. These individuals were not paid inspectors, but they were privileged in the governance of local schooling. The School Act of 1846 empowered clergymen and ministers of legally recognized sects, district court judges, district wardens (also appointed), township councillors and local justices of the peace to visit schools as they saw fit, to question teachers and students, and to advise teachers as to educational method. These respectable local residents were also empowered by the Act to assemble at their pleasure to consider plans for educational improvement and to organize local libraries. They were invited to report to the Chief Superintendent of Education on all subjects of interest, and they were empowered to grant certificates to

43. Corrigan, *State formation and moral regulation*, ch. 3 and App. 1; Sutherland, *Policy-Making*, ch. 3

44. G. E. Boyce, *Hutton of Hastings* (Belleville, 1972); W. B. Turner, "W. Hutton," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto, 1976), Vol. IX, pp. 404–5.

45. For some information about Dexter D'Everado see J. H. Love, "Anti-Americanism, Local Concerns and the Response to Social Issues in Mid-19th Century Upper Canadian School Reform," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, OISE, 1978.

46. This is also illustrated by material cited in note 38.

teachers whom they might care to examine.[47] This clause was in fact struck from the School Act of 1849 by the opponents of centralized education, but restored in the Act of 1850. Unlike the indifferent sections of the rural population, the intervention by school visitors in the schoolroom was not a matter for the "school disturbers" clause in the Act of 1853. It signals quite clearly the class character of public education.

In our view inspection and the inspective function deserve more systematic attention. Yet they are invisible in the models of educational reform we discussed above. These models have attended so closely to the question of who wanted, appreciated or needed education that they have ignored the appearance of new political structures, of which we think the inspective function is a leading instance. We understand inspection as one solution attempted by nineteenth century ruling classes to some of the problems presented by bourgeois state formation. The guarantee of the general conditions of bourgeois rule by states increasingly came to involve the institution of effective local structures of governance and their regulation by the centre.

Of course, there were many national and international variations in this regard. In Canada West, as in England, attempts were made in the 1830s and 1840s to organize effective structures of governance which would sustain the interests of especially local property. Debates among political parties raged over these questions. In the educational development of Upper Canada, for instance, both Tory and Reform parties in the 1830s attempted the reconstruction of popular education, and agreed that educational reform was a key to public order. Reformers, however, sought to leave educational matters entirely in the hands of local proprietors and their representatives at the township level, while Tories sought strict central regulation of education.[48] These debates raged throughout the 1840s, and were only effectively resolved with the School Act of 1850.

But in part the necessity of an inspectoral police stemmed from the breakdown of those earlier forms of political governance which English observers had understood as "natural police."[49] The capacity of local elites to regulate the lower classes through

47. "An Act for the Better Establishment and Maintenance of Common Schools in Upper Canada," 9 Vic. c. 20, s. 14.

48. For both views, see J. G. Hodgins, ed. *Documentary History of Education in Upper Canada* (Toronto, 1894–1910), Vol. 2, pp. 289–322 and Vol. 3, pp. 279–83.

49. The movement from a perceived "natural policing" through to the argument for new forms of moral and social policing or regulation can be traced in the materials which follow. We wish to locate this shift in what the first named author identifies as a "crisis of moral economy," E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth, 1968); P. Corrigan and V. Gillespie, *Class struggle, social literacy and idle time* (Brighton, 1978); P. Corrigan and V. Corrigan, "Social policy and state formation until 1871," in *Social Work, Welfare and the State*, ed. N. Parry et al (Leeds, 1979); P. Corrigan, ed. *Capitalism, state formation and Marxist theory* (London, 1980); P. Corrigan and D. Sayer, "How the law rules," in *Law, State and Society*, eds. B. Fryer et al (London, 1981). Compare B. Harrison, "State intervention and moral reform," in *Pressure from without*, ed. P. Hollis (Leeds, 1974); B. Supple, "Legislation and Virtue," in *Historical Perspectives*, ed. N. McKendrick (London, 1974). For two contrasting but continuous accounts see Edwin Chadwick, "Preventive Police," *London Review* I (1829–30) and "On the consolidation of police forces . . .," *Fraser's Magazine* (January 1868).

direct personal contact and traditional powers declined with the generalization of commodity production and exchange. The resulting independence of lower classes — exacerbated in the case of North America by relatively easy access to the means of production — came increasingly to be seen as a politically menacing moral degradation. The need for what Foucault has called a new and "constant policing" was already grasped by political theorists in the late eighteenth century.[50]

The inspective function, in other words, condenses a number of features of a general crisis of rule. The inspective function alerts us to one of the ways in which a particular class perspective (especially concerned with the proper relations between self and society) of pedagogic and curricular form was regulated into dominance through the labour of administrators and their agents. *Particular* values, *specific* orientations to governance and to property, *definite* senses of morality and identity, all were conveyed through education as the schooling of the population by the state.[51] Political governance, we emphasize, was, ideally for the governing classes at least, self-governance. Effective political rule was self-discipline. The political institutions, like public education, developed in the nineteenth century aimed to discipline the heart of the population, to reconstruct the forms of behaviour, character and comportment common in civil society, to transform political governance into conscience and character traits.[52]

Part of the political problem for nineteenth-century ruling classes, then, was to construct institutions which would produce good character, and repress institutions which might produce bad character. Social reformers were intensely aware of the political productivity of social institutions in general. They sought to put in place institutions productive of "cheerful and implicit obedience," while suppressing those productive of "immorality and degradation." They were explicitly concerned with the form of institutions. Furthermore, once morally desirable institutions were in place, it was necessary to monitor their performance and to ensure that their promise indeed became their practice. As Arthur Buller, the educational observer attached to the Durham mission, pointed out in 1839, the "vitality of every system of education must essentially reside" in the "provisions for inspection and supervision." A paper edu-

50. See especially Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence* (Indianapolis, 1983).

51. In addition to the other titles cited above, see B. Finkelstein, ed., *Regulated Children, Liberated Children* (New York, 1979); "Pedagogy as Intrusion," *History of Childhood Quarterly* 2 (1975); J. M. Goldstrom, *The social content of education, 1800–1870* (Cork, 1972); R. Gordon and D. Lawton, *Curriculum change in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (London, 1978); P. Corrigan, "On Moral Regulation," *Sociological Review* 29 (1981).

52. See J. V. Smith, "Manners, moralities and mentalities," in *Scottish Culture and Scottish Education*, eds. W. H. Humes and H. M. Paterson (Edinburgh, 1982); P. McCann, ed. *Popular education and socialization in the nineteenth century* (London, 1977); B. Curtis, "The Speller Expelled: Disciplining the Common Reader in Canada West," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 22 (August 1985); "The playground in nineteenth century Ontario: theory and practice," *Material History Bulletin* (forthcoming 1985).

cational scheme might hold some promise, but "all is of no avail unless that scheme is watched," and regulated by "an honest and active inspection."[53]

The inspective function demands more attention in our view, as do the formal political changes implicated in the public educational project. The explicit concern of educational reformers in this formative period with moral regulation in carefully structured institutions tended to fade as state education was administered into dominance. To the extent that the public educational system successfully marginalized and eradicated other educational forms and practices, schooling comes to seem to observers as the natural or humane alternative to a youth spent in idleness or in the factory. Where alternative patterns of life and education were annihilated by state schooling, its political/moral character seemed to disappear. Educational discourse then came to revolve around such apparently neutral concepts as efficiency.

Still, ample evidence exists to support our claim that inspection helped establish and make ordinary the dominance of public schooling. School reformers themselves anticipated this result. Egerton Ryerson's *Report on a System of Public Elementary Instruction for Upper Canada* called for the establishment of a system of inspection and argued that

> it is now generally admitted, that the education of the people is more dependent on the administration than upon the provisions of the laws relating to public instruction.

This recommendation was cited approvingly fifty years later by the then-minister of education for Ontario, George Ross.[54] The chief inspector for the Toronto Board of Education wrote in 1915,

> The Provincial Government is therefore responsible, directly and actually, for the general nature and efficiency of the school system in every part of the Province. The members of the school boards exercise administrative not constructive powers. They are trustees to whom is committed the duty of carrying out an important trust clearly defined in the school law. Thus *the criterion of efficiency* is not locally determined as in many places in the United States. It is Provincially prescribed. *The criterion is virtually the expert judgement of the supervising authorities. There can be no local modification of this standard or substitution for it.*[55]

In practice, the "criterion of efficiency" involved such questions as who could enter pedagogical space and for what purposes, the timing of schooling — both as timetabling and pressures for certain kinds of attendance — and a range of other matters

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53. Sir C. P. Lucas, ed., *Lord Durham's Report on the Affairs of British North America* (Oxford, 1912), Vol. 3, pp. 283–88.
54. G. W. Ross, *The Schools of England and Germany* (Toronto, 1894), p. 15.
55. Toronto Board of Education, *Annual Report* (Toronto, 1915), p. 42, emphasis ours. We are grateful to Kari Delhi of the Department of Sociology, OISE for this reference.

such as teacher competence, curriculum and pedagogical form.[56] We must first remark in this quotation that power in education has been neutralized as efficiency, and afterwards that the criterion of efficiency rests entirely with the central authority and its officers (inspectors).

Both of the models we have discussed here, impositionist and voluntarist, have tended to lose sight of the question of educational form through an exclusive focus on the question of who wanted or did not want public schools. This is a difficult question in its own right, but we argue that the question of educational form is the prior question. If state schooling was indeed a form of moral regulation which successfully eliminated earlier educational forms and which successfully contributed to the creation of "cheerful and implicit obedience," could we not then argue that voluntarist writers take the success of state schooling as its cause? Power, Foucault reminds us, succeeds best in the bourgeois era where it disappears. To pose the question of institutional form may be the best method to uncover the operation of power.

56. There is much to be learned from a study of the texts on the subject of school management. In cooperation with Bob Lanning, we shall undertake a detailed analysis of one such text, John Millar's *School Management* (Toronto, 1897) in a forthcoming volume edited by T. Wotherspoon, *The political economy of education in Canada* (Toronto, 1986). Our contribution to that volume is entitled "The political space of schooling."