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THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF MONTREAL IN THE 1850's

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For the student of local history, Montreal provides rich hunting. Even its parochial events were picturesque, and, since the city was a metropolis (in the sense understood by N. S. B. Gras), much of its local history had a genuinely national significance. Moreover, concerning Montrealers there is a wealth of biographical data, which imparts a personal, dynamic, element. In the decade of the 'fifties, the opening of great frontiers of opportunity (in fashion resembling to-day) brought new relationships to the social classes of Montreal. Hence, the appropriateness of a study of the class structure of the city in relation to its local history.

The main historical marks of Montreal in the 1850's may be briefly indicated: The decade opened on a note of extreme depression, the aftermath of the incendiarism and rioting of 1849. "Montreal wears a gloomy aspect; the population within the last few years has decreased some thousands . . . the streets look deserted . . . buildings burned a year ago are still in ruins. Every third store seems to want an occupant, and empty houses groan for tenants . . ." The early 'fifties witnessed little improvement; in 1852, fires which left homeless about 10,000 of its 57,000 inhabitants; in 1853, bitter racial tensions, occasioned ostensibly by the preaching of Father Gavazzi; in 1854, cholera. The next year, 1855, saw a dramatic change for the better. In October, the news of the storming of Sebastopol brought Montrealers into the streets, for the first time in a decade, on the same side. Commenting on the event, the *Gazette* said, prophetically, "France and England! Their descendants in Canada welcome their alliance and rejoice together in their victories!" At about the same time other mollifying forces came into play. In November, 1856, the Grand Trunk Railway was opened to Toronto. Between 1853 and 1859, construction was carried forward on the Victoria Bridge,¹ and between 1853 and 1856 on the Montreal waterworks.² These were sustained economic undertakings, creating employment and maintaining pay-rolls quite without parallel in the city's history.

In the decade of the 'fifties, the population of Montreal advanced from about 57,000 to over 92,000, the English speaking having a majority

¹ J. Hodges, *The Construction of the Great Victoria Bridge*, (London, 1860), p. 26.

² *Montreal in 1856. A Sketch prepared for the Celebration of the Opening of the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada* (Montreal, 1856), p. 16.

of about two per cent.³ It was unevenly settled in two areas, a narrow and tightly-packed region along the river, and a wider zone, which by 1850 had reached St. Catherine and by 1860 had passed Sherbrooke Street.⁴ Described functionally, the two areas were, respectively, commercial and administrative, and residential. The residence were chiefly of the well-to-do, tradition no longer requiring a merchant to live over his shop in the crowded city.⁵ Although the old terms, *cit  et faubourgs*, city and suburbs, were still employed, their meaning had largely gone. The living quarters of the less-well-to-do were more widely scattered. The decisive forces in the 'fifties lay in more distant areas, and in new occupations.

Along the line of the Lachine Canal, where the surplus water could be leased for power purposes, were knots of factories, Black's Bridge, Saint-Gabriel's Lock, and C te Saint-Paul.⁶ This development began in 1847 with the erection of the City Flour Mills, and reached its apex in 1854 with the opening of the Redpath Sugar Refinery.⁷ Here, as an enthusiastic publicist put it, was a "little Lowell or Fall River". South of the Canal, and on the promontory known as Point Saint-Charles, the Grand Trunk laid out the temporary plant for building the Victoria Bridge and the permanent shops for servicing the railway.⁸ The Grand Trunk shops represented the ultimate in mechanization. They, and the factories on the Canal, required a class of labour and a form of management far different from that of the warehouses, markets, and timber yards of the commercial city. Thus, as the economic character of Montreal changed, so did its social structure.

The 1850's witnessed the foundation-laying of at least three major Montreal fortunes. They were all the work of young men, or of men in their vigorous prime. The senior, John Redpath, was about fifty, when he turned from contracting and real estate to sugar-refining.⁹ His purpose was to exploit a new industry, and, more humanly, to provide for his sons.¹⁰ A letter written by Peter (the elder son) to his brother care-

³ *Canada*, Censuses, 1850-1 and 1860-1. The accuracy of census figures was disputed by the compiler of the Montreal directory, R. W. S. Mackay. "He believes the gross population to be *considerably underrated*...."

⁴ The official boundaries of the city were those fixed by Sir Alured Clarke's proclamation of May 25, 1792. These are almost impossible to describe in modern terms, since they were defined in relation to the ancient fortifications, which themselves were demolished in 1817.

⁵ T. S. Brown, *Montreal Fifty Years Ago* (Montreal, n.d.), p. 21; also, T. Saint-Pierre, *Histoire du Commerce Canadien Franais de Montr al* (Montr al, 1894), p. 63; R. George, *The House of Birks* (Montreal, 1946), p. 13.

⁶ *Montreal in 1856*, p. 36.

⁷ *Redpath Centennial, A Hundred Years of Progress* (Montreal, 1955), p. 8.

⁸ *Montreal Business Sketches, etc.* (Montreal, 1865), p. 211; also Hodges' *Construction of the Great Victoria Bridge*.

⁹ R. Campbell, *History of the Scotch Presbyterian Church, St. Gabriel Street, Montreal* (Montreal, 1887), p. 388.

¹⁰ *Redpath Centennial*, p. 14.

fully sets out the situation: "Father is building a Sugar Refinery and... you and I will be connected with it. It will probably be in operation next August. It is a very great undertaking for... one man [and] I hope it will repay Father for all the anxiety attendant upon such a serious outlay of money on a new undertaking..."¹¹ Until 1880, the Refinery was owned as a partnership among the Redpath sons or sons-in-law. Another highly profitable family business begun in 1856 was the flour mill operated by Alexander W. and John Ogilvie. In this instance, the principals were very young; Alexander W. was only twenty-three, when, in 1852, he had entered into partnership with his uncle, an established miller.¹² The Ogilvies were of farming stock from Côte Saint-Michel, but the profit of dealing in wheat, rather than in raising it, drew them into industry. They became the leading Montreal millers of the late nineteenth century.¹³ The last of the group was Hugh Allan.¹⁴ He inherited a small fleet of sailing packets, and a family connexion of four brothers. A judicious disposition of these assets enabled him, in 1852, to form the Montreal Ocean Steamship Company. Three years later, 1855, the Company secured a subsidy from the Canadian government for the fortnightly carriage of mails between Montreal or Portland, and the British ports.¹⁵ When Allan died in 1882, he left a fortune variously estimated at from six to eight million dollars, the largest accumulation by a Canadian up to that time. Two apparent omissions should be recognized: There were no French Canadian fortunes begun in the 1850's, although it would be easy to cite representative names both in the '40s and the '60s. For example, Sincennes, the organizer in 1845 of the Richelieu Navigation Company which grew ultimately into the Canada Steamship Lines, and Hudon, who in the 1860's erected his great cotton mill in Hochelaga. Also, no mention was made of fortunes founded in retailing, which only then began to separate itself from wholesaling.

In general, the 'fifties was a prosperous decade. John Frothingham, the merchant-banker, noted comprehensively in his diary: "A fair business has been done this year [1852], all our goods rising on our hands, and sales being large. Steamboats & railways going on everywhere. Gold coming in from California & Australia... flour has risen 5/ lately, and iron is double the spring price..."¹⁶ The beneficiaries were those who could control some new enterprise, take advantage of the new lines of transportation, or manipulate money. Returns from industry were high, wages and cost of raw materials being correspondingly low. An annual

¹¹ *Redpath Centennial*, p. 8.

¹² *The Ogilvies of Montreal* (Montreal, 1904), p. 48.

¹³ *The Ogilvies of Montreal*, p. 9; also, G. R. Stevens, *Ogilvie in Canada, Pioneer Millers* (Montreal, 1951), p. 23.

¹⁴ Campbell, *St. Gabriel Street Church*, p. 385.

¹⁵ H. Fry, *A History of North Atlantic Steam Navigation* (London, 1896), p. 138.

¹⁶ Ms. diary of John Frothingham, Jan. 1, 1853, private possession.

return of £34,000 on an initial investment of £20,000 with a pay roll of less than £5000 was considered in no way remarkable.¹⁷ Another group to gain were professional or technical men who provided the skills requisite in the new enterprises. The instance of the lawyer-politician, George-Etienne Cartier, who rendered himself indispensable in securing railway charters and similar acts of incorporation, is well known. Less known are Cartier's excursions into insurance, an interest which was suitably acknowledged when he became a director of the Canada Life Assurance Company in 1849.¹⁸ He also became solicitor for the Grand Trunk. Another early corporation lawyer was Christopher Dunkin, "the friend" of numerous seigneurs in their struggles to secure compensation from the Commutation Act. On the technical side, George Drummond provided an excellent example. He was the chemist and plant manager imported from Scotland by Redpath to initiate sugar refining. In 1857, he married one of Redpath's daughters, and in 1861 was admitted to the partnership. A slightly different type was provided by Brown Chamberlain, who, in 1850, became editor (and about three years later, proprietor) of the *Montreal Gazette*, and the apologist of the new order.

Perhaps the order was really not new, but was composed of younger men. They were more tolerant of racial differences than their immediate predecessors. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that John A. Macdonald and George-Etienne Cartier were the politicians of their predilection. T. S. Brown, one of the most careful observers (at least among Anglo-Montrealers), traced the beginning of this to 1834, when the organization of la Banque du Peuple placed French Canadian businessmen on equal terms with their English-speaking counterparts.¹⁹ Another powerful factor was the importance of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, or of the *Evêché*, as employers. Their contracts for church building were the most considerable available in Montreal.²⁰ John Redpath, for example, obtained the contract for the masonry of the new Notre Dame Church. Whatever the cause, the accord on social lines was very real. To select an instance at random. In the early spring of 1847, in anticipation of the Famine emigration from Ireland, various relief projects were discussed. John Eaton Mills, the Mayor, opposed granting direct assistance, since it "would reduce the emigrants . . . to prefer its benefits rather than to trust their own exertions . . ." ²¹ Olivier Berthelet powerfully supported this view, pointing to the painful experience of the Roman Catholic Asylum, which was filled with over seven hundred idle persons, "a great number were young men, masons, carpenters, and all other trades", vic-

¹⁷ *Montreal in 1856*, p. 49.

¹⁸ *La Minerve*, le 22 oct., 1849.

¹⁹ Brown, *Montreal*, p. 25.

²⁰ O. Maurault, *Nos Messieurs* (Montréal, 1936), p. 49, n. 2: also, L. Pouliot, *Monseigneur Bourget et son Temps* (Montréal, 1955), p. 30.

²¹ *Montreal Transcript*, March 18, 1847.

tims of intemperance. The similarity in attitude of the well-to-do Montrealers, whether French Canadian or Anglo-Canadian, is striking, and suggests a much wider extension of what Marcus Lee Hansen called "practical Puritanism", than the nineteenth century United States.²² It had the effect of making allies of men such as Berthelet, usually regarded as a model French Canadian and Roman Catholic philanthropist, and John Dougall, the champion of Evangelical Protestantism. While events such as the Gavazzi riot could exacerbate relations, the moneyed classes clearly had found a practical *modus vivendi*.

In discussing classes other than the established and propertied, a different approach is necessary. Biographical information is scanty, not because these classes were illiterate, but because they did not enjoy the permanence of residence which favoured the preservation of personal papers. Information derived from other sources requires careful scrutiny. This is especially so when the informant was the employer, whose strong neo-Puritanism has already been referred to. The poor were scolded, and their numerous misfortunes ascribed to intemperance or indifference. A very early note by James O'Donnell, the builder of Notre Dame Church, is apposite: "On [sic] respect to your workmen, I know well their deficiency; there are [sic] not a mechanic amongst them.... They are universally careless and inattentive... all they care for is their pay, and to do as little work... as they can...." "He smokes his pipe, sings his song, etc...."²³ At a later time, James Hodges, one of the contractors of the Victoria Bridge, denounced the proneness of the Canadian workers to strike, "it is almost a universal custom for mechanics... to strike twice a year, let the rate of wages be what it may...."²⁴ The contagion spread to the contractors' English labourers who became quite "unmanageable". At one point a species of general stoppage of work was threatened: "The mechanics & labourers... on the [Victoria] bridge struck for shorter days on Saturday.... Yesterday & to-day they have been around to the foundries... telling the working men to stop or they would break their heads. Some people tried to resist them, but it was no use...."²⁵ A catalogue of this sort might be continued indefinitely. It may contain some truth, but it is certainly overdrawn.

An examination of censuses, and similar sources, reveals a less alarming picture. The labour force in the city was always very large compared with the total population, and also with the total employable male population. There was wide-spread employment of children, as shown by occasional detailed statements on the composition of a mill or factory staff. Women were also employed, principally as domestics, but also

²² Marcus Lee Hansen, *Essays in Immigration* (Cambridge, Mass. 1948), "Immigration and Puritanism," p. 97.

²³ O. Maurault, *La Paroisse* (Montréal, 1929), p. 90, n. 60.

²⁴ Hodges, *The Great Victoria Bridge*, p. 26.

²⁵ Frothingham diary, May 1, 1855.

as "tailoresses", a designation which appears to have included fur, as well as garment, workers. Wages varied enormously between occupations. In the middle 'fifties, the best paid were the machinists employed by C. S. Rodier, the farm implement manufacturer.²⁶ They received 6s 3d a day. The worst paid were women, some of whom got 10s a week. The standard wage for women garment workers was not much better, 11s 5d, a week. Nonetheless, these were improvements over the dollar-a-day wage paid to "the highest class" labourer at the beginning of the decade. As usual, increase in wages lagged behind the rising cost of living. Observers from less inflated regions were appalled by Montreal prices. J. W. Dawson, the Principal of McGill University, wrote, "£100 here is worth for domestic purchases little more than £50 in Pictou [Nova Scotia] . . ." ²⁷ The working man suffered in other ways, as well. When the city was rebuilt, after the disastrous fires of 1845 and 1852, tenements, or multiple dwellings, replaced the detached houses, and obliterated their gardens. This was also the plan adopted in building the railway workers' houses in Point Saint-Charles.²⁸ They were constructed in terraces, the fronts set flush with the street line, and having scarcely more space in the rear than was required for privies, and the community well and wash house. As the city increased in area, the country and cheap farm truck receded, likewise pasture for the family cow, where that luxury existed.²⁹ By the end of the 'fifties, the Montreal workingman had little recourse but his wages.

Other aspects of the wage-earning classes are less easy to set in focus. They were divided racially among French Canadians, Anglo-Canadians, and British immigrants. Except, however, in a few skilled trades, such as woodworking (virtually a French Canadian monopoly), they were not employed on racial lines. Thus, they were in mutual competition. This factor probably generated the friction always present at working-class level, and led to such outbursts as the Gavazzi riot of June 9, 1853. In this instance, two further factors contributed; first, the numerical inadequacy of the civilian police, which mustered only fifty men;³⁰ second, the alarm resulting from the great fires of 1852 and the cholera epidemic of that year. The presence of a large immigrant group was a further source of weakness. It kept wages low, contributing therefore to its own exploitation, as well as to that of the native-born workers, and it posed serious problems in adaptation. The Irish, who formed the largest immigrant group, experienced these disabilities to the full.³¹

²⁶ *Montreal in 1856*, p. 47.

²⁷ McGill University, Redpath Library, Dawson Correspondence, J. W. Dawson to J. Dawson, January 19, 1856.

²⁸ Ms. "Reminiscences of Point Saint Charles", private possession.

²⁹ Ms. diary of G. E. Clerk, various entries, private possession.

³⁰ McGill University, Redpath Library, Ms. diary of Frederick Griffin, June 9, 1853; *Montreal Almanac*, 1853.

³¹ G. R. C. Keep, *The Irish Community in Montreal* (McGill thesis, 1949); also, J. I. Cooper, "Irish Immigration and the Canadian Church before the middle

They formed two communities, separated initially by the psychological experience of the Famine, and laterly by a struggle to control community organizations, such as the St. Patrick's Society.³² They were even divided in place of residence: A considerable number of the pre-Famine Irish lived in "little Dublin," along Chenneville Street. Later arrivals crowded into Griffintown. The appearance of brilliant newcomers, such as Thomas D'Arcy McGee, roused the jealousy of the older Irish leaders.³³ In a sense, many of the French Canadians, too, were immigrants, former farm people adapting themselves to urban life. "No people [are] better adapted for factory hands, more intelligent, docile, and giving less trouble to their employers..." Accordingly, of labour solidarity there was little. Trade unions were really mutual benefit societies, such as l'union Saint-Joseph, formed in 1851 among stone cutters. The weakness of organization in Montreal is curious when set against the successful combinations in Quebec city of French Canadian shipwrights and of Irish longshoremen.³⁴

One result of the stunted development of working-class organization was to place initiative in social and charitable action elsewhere. By the 'fifties, the tradition of well-to-do-leadership was established, and was evidenced by a net-work of agencies ranging from savings banks,³⁵ to hospitals. An important mechanism was provided by the national societies, Saint-Jean Baptiste, St. Andrew's, St. George's, St. Patrick's, and the German Society.³⁶ In 1855, St. George's Society laid out almost £300 in charity, nor was this exceptional.³⁷ The societies had originated in the pre-Rebellion era, Saint-Jean Baptiste meeting for the first time within four weeks of the moving of the Ninety-Two Resolutions.³⁸ Then, they were political in aim, to hold French Canadian or British immigrant opinion to the party line, whether reform or "constitutional".³⁹ By the 'fifties, prestige, rather than political value attached to "Office-bearing". The

of the 19th Century" (*The Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society*, II (3), May, 1955, 1-20).

³² Private possession of the author; Ms. notes.

³³ Ms. diary of G. E. Clerk, "October 2.... a row between Devlin and McGee... Devlin spat in McGee's face near Post Office. Much talk..." private possession.

³⁴ J. I. Cooper, "The Quebec Ship Labourers' Benevolent Society" (*Canadian Historical Review*, XXX (4), Dec., 1949, 336-343).

³⁵ J. I. Cooper, "The Origins and Early History of the Montreal City and District Savings Bank, 1846-1871" (*Canadian Catholic Historical Association, Report 1945-46*, 15-25); J. I. Cooper, "Some Early Canadian Savings Banks" (*Canadian Banker*, LVII (2), spring, 1950, 135-143).

³⁶ Of the five societies, the records of the German Society, and of St. Andrew's are complete from their foundation. They are in the possession of the societies. The records of the others are fragmentary. In 1856, St. Patrick's divided into a continuing Roman Catholic St. Patrick's and an Irish Protestant Benevolent Society.

³⁷ *Constitution and By-Laws of the St. George's Society of Montreal* (Montreal, 1856), "A statement of relief... January, 1855 to... January, 1856."

³⁸ F. Saintonge, *Témoin de la Lumière* (Montréal, 1945), p. 246.

³⁹ H. Allan, *Narrative of the Proceedings of the St. Andrew's Society etc.* (Montreal, 1855), p. 3.

societies served a useful social purpose in keeping together the well-to-do, who monopolized the executive posts, and the very miscellaneous persons comprising the "ordinary" membership.⁴⁰ The annual parades, banquets, and corporate church services, cut across racial lines, since "the sister societies" were always invited. The same services, although in a much more intimate fashion, were performed by the Masonic lodges. In this period, however, Montreal Masonry was much divided on the subject of Grand Lodge allegiance, and its local importance was much less than at earlier or later times.⁴¹

With the churches, it was much otherwise. Rich in experience, and possessing a devoted personnel, the Roman Catholic Church provided a wide range of social services. These were carried forward partly by religious communities, for in the 1840's, Bishop Bourget had settled in the Diocese seven communities, four of which (Sœurs de la Providence, Sœurs de la Miséricorde, Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and Jesuits) were concerned specifically with problems arising from urban conditions.⁴² Laymen were also drawn in, and, in 1848, the first *conférence* of the Saint-Vincent de Paul Society was formed.⁴³ By 1860, there were six at work in Montreal. On this scale, Protestants could offer little. Yet it is only proper to point out that they were moving towards co-operation in education⁴⁴ as well as in certain forms of charitable work, the care of orphans, and of indigent persons.⁴⁵ The starting-point in much of this came at an earlier time, and is to be associated with the establishment, in 1822, of the American Presbyterian Church (currently the Erskine-American congregation of the United Church of Canada), and of the ministry of its first clergyman, the Rev. Joseph Christmas. Another pioneer in the field of practical co-operation among Protestants was the Rev. John Gilmour (spelled originally Gilmore), the first regularly established Baptist pastor in Montreal. In the 1850's, this spirit was continued by the Right Rev. Francis Fulford, who had been consecrated Anglican bishop of Montreal in 1850.⁴⁶ Markedly conciliatory in his relations with other communions, Fulford assisted powerfully in shaping this Montreal Protestant tradition.

⁴⁰ For example, the initiates of 1849 into St. Andrew's included two coopers, a plumber, two clerks, a confectioner, a saddler, and a merchant.

⁴¹ J. I. Cooper, *History of St. George's Lodge No. 10 G.R.Q.* (Montreal, 1955).

⁴² F. Langevin, *Mgr Ignace Bourget* (Montréal, 1931), p. 113.

⁴³ *Le Diocèse de Montréal, à la Fin du Dix-Neuvième Siècle* (Montréal, 1900). p. 122.

⁴⁴ J. I. Cooper, "Canada Educational and Home Missionary Society" (*Canadian Historical Review*, XXVI (1), March, 1945, 42-48).

⁴⁵ *A History of the Montreal Ladies' Benevolent Society* (Montreal, 1921); also historical note, *Forty-third Annual Report, Protestant Orphans' Asylum*, (Montreal, 1864).

⁴⁶ J. D. Borthwick, *History of the Diocese of Montreal* (Montreal, 1910), Part II, 10-25.

Important elements of social structure were supplied by the new schools. The operative phrase, new, signified schools designed to supply the specialized personnel, professional, technical, or clerical, the 'fifties demanded. The earliest of such schools was *Collège Sainte-Marie*, opened in 1848 by the Jesuits, "pour les personnes du monde . . ." in Bishop Bourget's phrase.⁴⁷ From 1851 (1851-1867), instruction in Law was associated with Saint-Mary's,⁴⁸ although the College possessed no degree-granting powers. Persons wishing a law degree were compelled to turn to McGill University, whose Faculty of Law antedated instruction at Saint-Mary's by three years.⁴⁹ This consideration partly accounts for the large proportion of French Canadians who received their legal training at McGill; for example, of the seventy-four Bachelor of Civil Law degrees awarded between 1850 and 1864, twenty-six were granted to French Canadians, who bore such representative names as Laurier, Lanctôt, Taschereau, and Sabourin. The teaching-staff contained even a higher proportion, since two of the total of five instructors in Law were French Canadians. The amended charter of 1852 brought McGill squarely into line with the new developments in education.⁵⁰ The substance of the amendments was to create a board of governors, drawn exclusively from Lower Canada, and largely from Montreal. The governors became, in fact, representative of the very group which has formed such an important section of this study, the new men in finance, industry, and transportation. In 1855, J. W. Dawson, a young Nova Scotian, entered on a principalship destined to extend over almost forty years (1855-1893). He had no feeling for "a college on the old Oxfordian plan . . .,"⁵¹ but for one in which "practical results . . . suitable to Canada . . ." ⁵² could be achieved. Dawson inherited three faculties, Medicine, 1827, Arts, 1843,⁵³ and Law, as already indicated, 1848. Before his first year was out, he inaugurated the teaching of Civil Engineering, instruction being given by T. C. Keefer. In 1859, McGill graduated its first students in Engineering. Here was one answer to the needs of the new industrial order.

Meanwhile, a move of even wider social significance was made. In 1856, an Order-in-Council finally translated the legislative good intentions of five years earlier into two normal schools in Montreal, l'Ecole Normale

⁴⁷ Langevin, *Bourget*, p. 118.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁴⁹ J. I. Cooper, "The Law comes to McGill" (*McGill News*, XXX (4), spring, 1948). In the *Prospectus, Faculté de Droit*, Université de Montréal (1948), the incorrect date for the foundation of the McGill law faculty is given, p. 5, n. 1.

⁵⁰ J. I. Cooper, "The Amended Charter of 1852" (*McGill News*, XXXIV (4), spring, 1952).

⁵¹ McGill University, Redpath Library, Dawson Correspondence, J. W. Dawson to J. Dawson, January 15, 1856.

⁵² J. W. Dawson, *Inaugural Discourse*, November, 1855 (Montreal, n.d.).

⁵³ J. I. Cooper, "A Day of Small Things" (*McGill News*, XXIV (4), spring, 1943).

Jacques-Cartier,⁵⁴ and the McGill Normal,⁵⁵ and one in Quebec. (It should be noted that the Education Acts of 1841 and 1846 had committed Canada East to a dual system of education, thereby recognizing one of the basic pre-suppositions in its social structure.) The obligation to establish a normal school for English-speaking teachers provided Dawson with an opportunity, and a challenge. He had begun his career as an inspector of schools, and, for the balance of his long tenure as Principal of McGill University, he maintained a warm interest. Insofar as he had a defined philosophy of education, it was to insist on the fundamental unity among schools at all levels, elementary, secondary, and higher. Accordingly, as early as September, 1856, the characteristic note appears in the Minutes of the Board of Governors, "3. Upon the Principal urging the necessity of . . . steps relative to the Normal School . . . resolved . . . a Committee . . ." ⁵⁶ The problem posed was this: McGill had no school suitable for teacher-training, still less a staff capable of instruction and criticism. (The High School of Montreal, at that time a department of the University, was exclusively a secondary school for boys.⁵⁷) The solution of this problem was provided by Bishop Fulford. He possessed a normal and model school, conducted by the Colonial Church and School Society, dedicated to the formation of teachers for Anglican parochial schools. It had come into operation in 1853.⁵⁸ Now, in 1856, it was transferred to McGill and became, with its expert staff, the operative section of the McGill Normal School. Schools, teachers, and salaries were always present in Fulford's mind. Early in 1856 he had written in his diary:

Mons Cartier the Provincial Secretary and Mons Chauveau the new Inspector of Schools called to speak to me of the intention of the Government respecting Model Schools. I took Mr. Hicks, the Master of our Model School, to Mons Chauveau the following day & we had a long conversation. I hope that something will be done to raise the position of the teachers, & provide better remuneration & then we may hope to have better schools.⁵⁹

On March 3, 1857, the two normal schools were formally opened, Jacques-Cartier in the morning; McGill, in the afternoon.⁶⁰ The Superintendent of Education, Pierre-Joseph Chauveau, presided eloquently at both.

In reviewing the social developments of the 1850's, one aspect is outstanding, the disproportionate influence wielded by the small group of young industrialists or commercial men. In every sense, they formed a

⁵⁴ *Le Diocèse de Montréal à la Fin du Dix-Neuvième Siècle*, p. 102.

⁵⁵ W. P. Percival, *Across the Years* (Montreal, 1946), p. 97.

⁵⁶ McGill University, Board of Governors, Minutes, September 27, 1856.

⁵⁷ J. I. Cooper, "When the High School of Montreal and McGill were one" (*McGill News*, XXIV (5), autumn, 1943).

⁵⁸ *First Report of the Colonial Church and School Society, etc.* (Montreal, 1854), p. 6.

⁵⁹ Diocese of Montreal, Archives Committee, Ms. diary of the Rt. Rev. Francis Fulford, February 1, 1856.

⁶⁰ *Montreal Gazette*, March 5, 1857.

ruling caste: Of the five mayors of the decade, Fabre, Wilson, Starnes, Nelson, and Rodier, Nelson alone had no connection with the new order.⁶¹ They also exercised social leadership, presidencies of fraternal and national societies; masterships of fox hounds. Racial division within the ruling caste was less important than unity of outlook in social philosophy. Its views, so aptly summarized by the *Montreal Witness*, "There is nothing more cheering in the aspect of Canada than the extent to which good objects are promoted by private effort," were guiding principles which long survived the era which made them valid. The elements of strength in this group were continuity and the absence of an effective rival, or rivals. Montreal had no administrative class, no military caste, such as provincial capitals, Halifax, Fredericton, Quebec, or even Toronto, possessed. That the wage-earners should constitute a challenge was scarcely to be thought of. By the end of the 1850's they formed a genuine proletariat, yet they were slow to provide for themselves. The vigorous class conscious slogan, "It is the poor wot helps the poor," stirred little response. Perhaps like his French and British contemporaries, the Montreal workingman was beguiled by the franchise. The near presence of the United States was certainly a factor, since it drained away the dissatisfied, as well as the ambitious. The residue, without being in any way apathetic, were disposed to accept that station in life to which it had pleased God to call them.

The 'fifties closed on a sustained note of self-congratulation. A just summation of the decade that was passing came in 1860 with the visit of the Prince of Wales. He did all the *élite* could wish: He endowed McGill University with a gold medal; he danced twenty of the twenty-one dances at the gala ball. If the lower orders had grievances, they kept them to themselves, and the Prince's visit in Montreal passed off without a hitch. Finally, he inaugurated the Victoria Bridge. At the beginning of the 'fifties it was said that what Montreal needed were great civic objectives, combining beauty and utility, "botanical gardens, . . . ornamental cemeteries, . . . tubular bridges . . ." At the end of the decade, it must have seemed that the golden age had come.

⁶¹ J. C. Lamothe, *Histoire de la Corporation de la Cité de Montréal* (Montréal, 1903), p. 271.