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ARTICLE

Saving an Endangered Subject: High School History in Ontario Schools, 1960-2010

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Abstract

The rise, fall, and revival of History in Ontario high schools is full of twists and turns. History as an academic subject, once king of the social sciences, came, over the period 1960 to 2010, to occupy a smaller and smaller patch of the secondary school curriculum. Building upon insights gleaned from Bob Davis' 1995 book Whatever Happened to High School History?, veteran teacher, textbook writer and education professor Paul W. Bennett analyzes the impact of rise of the "new social studies" in the 1970s, the spread of the so-called "skills mania" of the 1980s, and the demise of the prevailing national narrative on the teaching of the subject. Summoning up lessons learned in the Ontario history classroom, he demonstrates how the fragmentation of the history-centred social studies curriculum contributed to the so-called "Canadian History Crisis" of the 1990s. In the wake of the 1995 Quebec Referendum, the teaching of Canadian history resurfaced as a major public policy issue. The recent advent of the "Historical Thinking" movement, sparked by UBC education professor Peter Seixas, signalled the beginning of a more recent revival and Trent University historian Christopher Dummitt's 2009 call in Contesting Clio's Craft to "move beyond inclusion" has begun to close the gap in the teaching of history between the university and high school levels.

Thirty-six years ago when I was a cocksure, brash 29-year-old Ontario high school history teacher at Aurora High School, north of Toronto, I issued a long-forgotten manifesto, disguised as a teacher's guide, and issued in defence of a subject being crowded out of the curriculum. Concerned about the rise of the "New Social Studies" and troubled by the Canada Studies Foundation's promotion of an integrated social sciences curriculum, I saw the core subject of high school history as an endangered species. Armed with an M.A. in Canadian and American History and a "Type A Specialist" certificate, only

five years into my career, I had the temerity to declare that, unless the teaching of the subject was revitalized and invigorated with current historiographic debates, it may become "the Latin of the '80s."[1] And I was not alone in expressing those views.

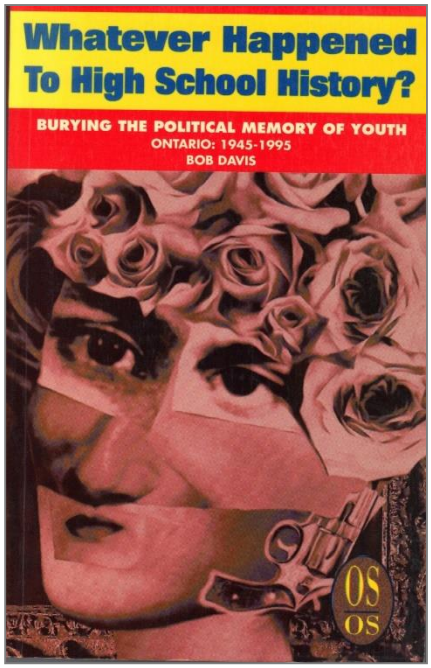
High school Canadian history survived in Ontario, much like a hardy perennial, but in doing so became barely recognizable, occupying a smaller and smaller patch of the garden. A "new social studies" curriculum displaced the self-standing subject and left high school history teachers in a quandary. [2] Since "the defeat of fascism and the triumph of American modernity," as OISE historian Ruth Sandwell pointed out, teachers of Canadian history survey courses abandoned "a single unified narrative" in favour of "histories that are more complex, varied and contested."[3] That definitely impacted what and how students learn in university Canadian history survey courses. It also fundamentally affected, over four decades, the teaching of history in our high schools. Social history gradually became the new orthodoxy, even in high schools. Almost every topic was approached as a "potted plant" and viewed through the lens of the new "multiple identities" categories of analysis – class, race, gender, and ethnicity. Sliced into smaller units of study – and in the absence of an integrating narrative – the subject became far more complex, increasingly "skills-driven," and, rather surprisingly, less appealing for high school students.

The spread of the "New Social Studies," reinforced by the gradual demise of the grand narrative in university history courses, exerted a tremendous impact on the teaching of high school history in most of Canada's English-speaking provinces. This article attempts to assess what really happened over the fifty-year span from 1960 to 2010 and its impact on the vitality of the subject in Ontario schools. It will explain the combined effects of the advent of the "new social history," the "skills-mania" curriculum initiative, and the "History Wars" of the 1990s. The so-called "Canadian History Crisis" generated national surveys and advocacy books fueling a public debate over the relationship between history education, public memory and citizenship. While the Quebec context is different, Jocelyn Letourneau has demonstrated the existence of a strikingly similar debate about historical memory and nationalism in that society.[4]

The sources of the subject's decline as a core subject from the 1960s until the early 2000s need to be examined in all their complexity. That exploration begins with an assessment of the impact of two interrelated pedagogical and curricular movements – progressivism and "new social studies" – on the centrality and health of the subject discipline. Building upon the work of Sam Wineburg (1991 and 2001), Peter Seixas (2000), and Penney Clark (2011),[5] the article will also examine the inherent contradictions between academic history and the "new social studies" and assess the potential of the movement to infuse "historical thinking" into the curriculum.[6] It concludes with a look at the disconnect between academic historians and secondary school teachers and the potential for *rapprochement* raised by Christopher Dummitt's 2009 call in *Contesting Clio's Craft* to "move beyond inclusion" in teaching history at both the university and high school levels.[7]

High School History –from its Zenith to the Margins

History was once king of the social sciences in Canadian high schools. In Ontario, high school history experienced its zenith, according to Bob Davis, in the period 1960 to 1967, when the academic curriculum consisted of five consecutive years of study, "uncontaminated by geography, grassroots citizenship, or progressive education!" [8] In his strongly opinionated, passionate book, *Whatever Happened to High School History?,* he tracks the fortunes of the subject discipline from 1944 to 1990 through a content analysis of a series of history teacher magazines, *The History News Letter* (1944-1964), *The Canadian Journal of History* and *The Canadian Journal of History and Social Science* (1965-1974), and *The History and Social Science Teacher* (1974-1990). That analysis demonstrates how history "moved from the centre to the margin" of the curriculum, effectively, in Davis's graphic description, "burying the political memory of youth" in Ontario.[9] The one surviving national journal for history and social science teachers eventually morphed into *Canadian Social Studies*, an explicitly social studies journal.



History lost its primacy in the Canadian West much earlier than in Ontario. In Alberta, Social Credit governments, as Amy von Heyking has shown, exhibited a populist streak and showed a remarkable proclivity for "progressive" educational initiatives.[10] Beginning in 1934, the Alberta Department embraced citizenship education and introduced a new species, the social sciences, into the curriculum. A cadre of progressive educationists, led by Hubert C. Newland and Donalda Dickie, favoured "social studies" and gradually succeeded in eliminating self-standing history courses in the province's high schools. Some had imbibed progressive ideas about education in American graduate programs, others simply brought an elementary school focus on the student rather than the subject to their work. Alberta's progressive reformers were highly critical of history as it was taught in schools and considered it largely irrelevant for children. They espoused a new philosophy of history, taught within the context of social studies. Whatever the intent, it resulted in the gradual abandonment of history, first in elementary levels, then altogether in the high school curriculum.[11] That absence was particularly acute when it came to pan-Canadian history content of any kind.

History remained a core academic subject in Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba, and the Maritimes until it came under attack in the late 1960s. The challenge eventually arose as an outgrowth of the reform zeal unleashed by the Ontario Hall-Dennis Report. When it first appeared in June 1968, the Report, entitled *Living and Learning* and popularly named after its co-chairs, Emmett Hall and Lloyd Dennis, was greeted with lavish praise, mostly generated by the Toronto media. The Report gave official sanction to a brand of romantic educational progressivism inspired by John Dewey (1959-1952), the renowned American philosopher, psychologist, and education reformer. Its authors openly embraced core

Deweyite principles: the child lies at the heart of "education for a democratic society," learning comes naturally to every child, but schools as institutions "throttle the free flow of individual thought and action."[12] Mimicking Dewey's pedagogic creed, the teacher's primary role was not to teach the subject or to impose certain "habits of mind," but rather to "establish a cheerful, social, permissive climate for learning" enabling the child to maintain "creative and democratic relationships."[13] Unlike previous dry and formalistic government reports, it conveyed a powerful message with catchy slogans such as "the truth shall make us free" and images of smiling children at play in the schools. With its appearance, subject disciplines like history were called into question by powerful education officials like Ontario Deputy Minister of Education J.R. (Jack McCarthy, steeped in child psychology, drawn disproportionately from elementary teaching backgrounds, and openly hostile to educational tradition. Teaching the student, not the subject, was their mantra and history was in their sight lines.[14]

It was no accident that the most intense public opposition was voiced by professors of humanities and secondary school history teachers. Among the first to cast stones were University of Toronto humanities professors whom the Ontario educational establishment dismissed as "carping academic critics."[15] The second wave was spearheaded by McMaster University historian James W. Daly (1932-1983). His vocal opposition and impressive command of the English language made him almost impossible to ignore. Soon after the appearance of his pamphlet, *Education or Molasses?* high school history teachers rallied to his cause. Among teachers and so-called "traditionalists" in education, business, and local politics, Daly's little book crystallized the gathering forces of resistance against not only the Hall-Dennis version of "Edutopia," but what he lambasted as "the supine acceptance of fashionable piffle."[16]

Much of the public opposition to the Report was generated by the academics, in league with secondary school teachers. University of Toronto English professor John M. Robson threw a well-timed dart on September 2, 1969, marking the first day of school with a column paying homage to historian Hilda Neatby's 1953 best seller *So Little for the Mind* and predicting that "Johnny" would now be doing more "living than learning" in Ontario's schools.[17] At Althouse College, University of Western Ontario, Geoffrey Milburn and Gary Meadows raised objections to the Report's assault on history as a subject discipline and warned that educational equalitarianism had often been associated with "intellectual flabbiness." Meadows went so far as to predict that "those tardy souls who need a little pushing to sweat for their knowledge" would provide "a classic monkey wrench for Ontario education *a la* Hall-Dennis." [18] High school history teacher Norman Sheffe was more muted in his criticism, but reported that the upheaval caused by the Report left his fellow teachers feeling like "Hansel and Gretel after the birds had eaten up the trail of bread crumbs."[19]

A massive survey conducted in the spring and summer of 1969 by the Ontario Teachers' Federation polled 6,127 teachers and purported to demonstrate that most teachers supported the general philosophy espoused in the Report.[20] Yet many veteran Ontario history teachers felt threatened by the call for a fundamental change in methods and even potential allies, such as Toronto's George Martell of *This Magazine is About Schools,* found fault with the supposedly "liberalizing" education manifesto. To Martell and more radical

progressives, the emphasis on "individualized" learning was seen as corporatist idea threatening to undermine the "sense of community" in public schools.[21]

The periodic murmurs of misgiving began to turn into signs of protest, in spite of Lloyd Dennis's strenuous missionary efforts. When Dennis spoke at McMaster University, the forum was sponsored by the History Department and he entered a virtual lion's den. Professor Daly glared at Dennis and the normally impartial meeting chairman, historian John Trueman, could not resist making his personal views known.[22] At McMaster and in other places, Dennis was lustily booed. [23] The charge that the Hall-Dennis Report sought to disassemble the prescribed curriculum provoked genuine outrage. Seeing the Report's evidence drawn mostly from the early grades, academically-inclined teachers instinctively agreed with Daly that the proposed Hall-Dennis curriculum as a "melange of mush" organized around little more than "general areas of learning." With the proposed abandonment of prescribed curricula, teachers would be left on their own to design new curricula without any training in the field. Academics and classroom teachers alike claimed that the Report utterly failed to make adequate provision for certain "core subjects," such as English, Mathematics, Science, and History, which were essential for an effective, balanced curriculum.[24]

History teachers were in the forefront of the resistance. Ontario's history and social studies teachers complained about the proposed curriculum's presentist bias and seeming acceptance of the assumption that "the present and the future are all that matters." After viewing the resulting Ontario History Guidelines, John Ricker, Chairman of History at Toronto's Faculty of Education, confirmed their worst fears, declaring the Hall-Dennis-inspired changes "an invitation for teachers to do their own thing."[25]

The highly-publicized crusade failed to roll back Hall-Dennis-inspired 'romantic progressive' reform but the message eventually sunk in, even within the bowels of the Ontario Department of Education. By January 1983, the bloom was off the Hall-Dennis rose and *The Globe and Mail* published a news feature by Judy Steed entitled "Crisis in the Schools." West Toronto history teacher John Sheppard, President of the Ontario History and Social Science Teachers Association (OHASSTA), told Steed that teachers held the Hall-Dennis Report responsible for "destroying education in Ontario." The popular Toronto media began to proclaim that the Hall-Dennis era was coming to an end. "Now, it's the eighties," Steed stated, "and it's back to the basics with more structure."[26] While the Hall-Dennis upheaval subsided, its effects lingered and marked the beginning of the gradual eclipse of history as a core component of the high school curriculum.

Strange Bedfellows: History and the Rise of the New Social Studies

High school history survived the onslaught of Hall-Dennis reform only to succumb to a more insidious challenge. The rise of "social history" in the universities was accompanied by a high school mutation, known as the "new social studies." The emerging trend gained ground throughout the 1970s, aided and abetted by a new Canada Studies Foundation. Although founded in response to A.B. Hodgetts's 1968 study, *What Culture? What Heritage?*[27], it evolved into a 'trojan horse' for multidisciplinary social science and further

eroded the "traditional" Canadian history curriculum. In concluding their work with the Canada Studies Foundation, A.B. Hodgetts and Paul Gallagher were intent on carrying the process one step further. Their summary report, *Teaching Canada for the '80s,* called for a common multidisciplinary framework for studies of Canada spanning the full range of school years. Their proposed Canada Studies curriculum was "pan-Canadian " in its perspectives and culminated in senior high school students studying public issues in Canada and the world.[28]

The Canada Studies movement, however well intended, challenged the primacy of history as an academic discipline. History and social studies departments began offering "new social studies" courses in "Canadian Studies" or in self-standing courses such as civics, law, economics, and sociology. With the spread of the credit system after 1969, students enjoyed more choice and gravitated to courses with a more contemporary focus.[29] High school history teachers found it ironic that a project aimed at promoting "national understanding" actually contributed to the further erosion of history, an intellectual discipline well suited to promoting such understanding. Secondary school history departments became increasingly cannibalized, as enrolments in pure history courses declined in favour of the new offerings. By 1994, history educators like Peter Seixas were accurate in describing history as "a subject adrift" in an "integrated curriculum."[30]

The shrinkage of high school history was also accelerated by the introduction of "social science skills," actively promoted by a new species of school administrators, known as curriculum consultants. One of the first to identify the threat was Robert J. Clark, a history education professor at Althouse College, University of Western Ontario. While surveying the new Ontario guidelines in May 1977, he came to a startling realization.[31] His ground-breaking 1979 essay, "'Hot Housing Tomatoes': History in Ontario Schools" blew the whistle on the creeping influence on history curriculum design of a new breed of social scientists who were neither history teachers nor historians. Teaching skills was beginning to take precedence over teaching history itself. Respected University of Toronto historian J.M.S Careless who had popularized the phrase "limited identities" also began to have grave doubts about the 'watering down' of history in secondary schools.[32] Allan Smith of the University of British Columbia saw the erosion of the subject in a broader context, as a prime example of the decline in Western thinking of the "faith in historical progress." [33] Such changes in the teaching of history passed almost unnoticed in the professional history teaching journals and among regular secondary school teachers. Preparing lessons, creating activities, and marking assignments tended to obscure the underlying changes revolutionizing the teaching of the subject.[34]

The changes besetting high school history ware really part of a broader movement to introduce "information age" skills into the curriculum. Veteran history teacher Bob Davis, a co-founder in 1966 of *This Magazine is About Schools,* and recognized as the voice of Toronto teacher activists, dubbed the phenomenon the "skills-mania."[35] It "crept in slowly", in his words, in the 1970s, and "arrived full blast in the 1980s." Provincial ministries of education and schools, publisher Rob Greenaway of Prentice-Hall Canada, were demanding new types of textbooks and learning materials. In an interview, published in the Summer of 1988, he went so far as to declare the 1980s "the decade of skills."[36]

History teaching was not immune to the advance of skills-mania. Teaching skills gradually came to supplant history itself, further separating school history from the academy. Curriculum planners and writers became "skills-obsessed" and driven by the overwhelming pressure to establish "learning outcomes," to teach "information-age" skills, and to prepare students for standardized performance testing. Teaching skills was viewed as essential to prepare students for what was termed the "New Global Economy" where greater competition and new "thinking skills" would rule. Leading corporations and business groups embraced the Conference Board of Canada's focus on promoting "employability skills."[37] Even liberal and left progressive educators were drawn to "critical thinking skills," which they saw as an opportunity to "teach students a critical view of society without having to preach to them."[38]

A close analysis of the Ontario school curricula and textbooks in the 1980s demonstrated that Canadian history in high school had suffered a 'double whammy.' The dissolution of the national narrative was lamented by Michael Bliss in his controversial Donald Creighton Centennial Lecture, entitled "Privatizing the Mind: The Sundering of Canadian History, the Sundering of Canada" and delivered on the eve of the 1991 federal referendum. According to Bliss, historians had dedicated themselves to exploring the "limited identities" of region, class, gender and ethnicity and were, therefore, party to the gradual fragmenting of any collective sense of national community.[39] Another outspoken member of the so-called Toronto school of historians, J.L. Granatstein, put it more bluntly. Historians of the 1970s and 1980s, he charged, had spent most of their time researching and teaching students about pork-packing, Marxist labour organizers, prisons and insane asylums, parish politics, and what he derisively described as "the history of housemaid's knee in Belleville in the 1890s." "Really," he added, "Who cares?"[40]

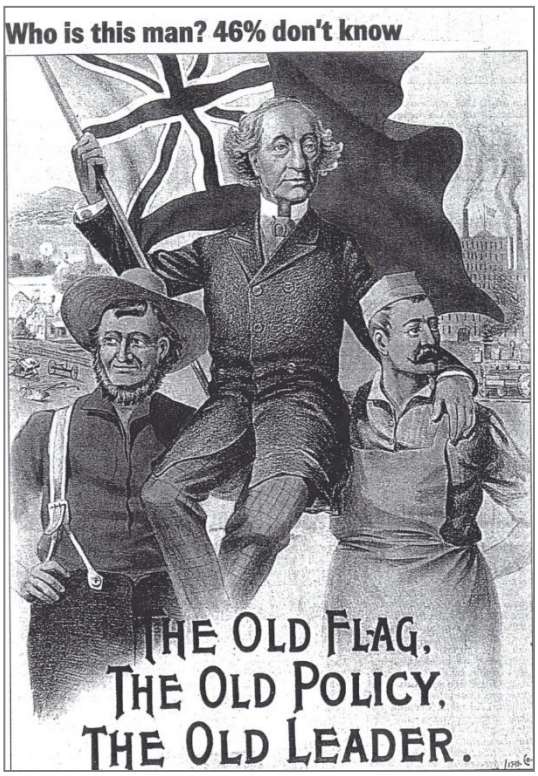
The Ontario high school history curriculum did gradually come to reflect that "limited identities" outlook. After the introduction of a new History and Contemporary Studies curriculum in 1987-88, Canadian history came to be taught in Grade 9 or 10 under the rubric "Life in Contemporary Canada" and again in Grade 13/OAC level within a North American comparative history framework. In both cases, the units of study reflected a "limited identities" perspective heavily weighted to regional, social class, and gender issues. Conspicuous by their absence from the senior history curriculum were units focusing explicitly on the national question and specifically on the Conquest, Quebec-Canada relations, or the ongoing constitutional crisis.[41] The most popular textbooks, including my own *Canada: A North American Nation* (1989) sought, for the most part, to heighten student awareness of our "limited identities" and the social experiences of life in regional or local communities.[42]

The second blow to the subject was the virtual abandonment of the teaching of history in favour of "the sociology of current social problems." Much of Bob Davis' *Whatever Happened to High School History?* focuses on the spread and debilitating effects of what he termed "sociology-across-the-curriculum." Davis had little use for J.L. Granatstein's defence of the History Canon because it championed the achievements of "white, bourgeois males" and excluded women, people of colour, aboriginals, recent immigrants, labour, and youth. Yet he did concur with Geoff Milburn, long-time editor of *The History and Social*

Science Teacher, who remained steadfast that "sociology and skills" were the "crucial causes of history's decline." [43] Unlike most educational progressives, Davis could read the nuances in the politics of history education. After spending a decade investigating the field, he recognized that both traditional academic teachers and old Tory academics were deeply distrustful of the spread of "pop sociology" as well as the "skills mania." He even had the temerity to wonder if the old "master narrative" was actually better than "no narrative at all."[44]

Saving Canadian History - The Restoration Movement and Its Impact

The smouldering debate over the state of Canadian history erupted as a major public policy issue in the 1990s. Michael Bliss's intervention fanned the flames of public concern stoked by the unsettling findings of Keith Spicer and his 1991 *Citizen's Forum on Canada's Future*, an earlier storm warning about public disillusionment with politics and the established political order.[45] The Dominion Institute, founded by Rudyard Griffiths and small group of recent university graduates in 1997, began producing national surveys raising serious questions about the state of public knowledge about past politics, wars, and civics. [46] Amid these rumblings, historian Jack Granatstein produced his controversial best seller, *Who Killed Canadian History?* (1998) reinforcing the message and identifying the alleged perpetrators, most notably the "new" social historians, ministries of education, faculties of education, and curriculum writers.[47]



Front Page Story and Editorial,
The Globe and Mail, 30 June 2001.

Saving Canadian history emerged as a *cause celebre*. The Historica Foundation, co-founded in October 1999 by Charles Bronfman and BCE's Lynton R. (Red) Wilson, emerged to fund greatly expanded resource programs, including the Heritage Minutes, Heritage Fairs, and the Canadian Encyclopedia Online. Responding to the public mood, CBC-TV and Radio Canada poured millions into Mark Starowitz's epic (2000-2001) *Canada: A Peoples' History* series.[48] With generous funding from federal Liberal governments, the Ontario government, and the corporate sector, three different organizations entered the field: the Historica Foundation, the Dominion Institute, and Canada's National History Society (CNHS), based in Winnipeg and publishers of *The Beaver*, now *Canada's History.* The McGill Centre for the Study of Canada, headed by Desmond Morton, was an influential catalyst. A Governor General's Award for Teaching Excellence, founded in 1996 and sponsored by CNHS, recognized a dozen or so exemplary teachers each year. Each of the three national history advocacy groups offered its own programs to ensure that "more history was taught better" in the schools. From 1998 to 2003, a Canadian history consortium, led by Historica and later the Association for

Canadian Studies, sponsored a Biennial National History Teaching Conference and, from 2001 to 2003, a Montreal-based national Summer Institute for Teaching Excellence in Canadian History.[49] All this activity managed to energize Canadian history enthusiasts, but it ran foursquare into the Ontario secondary school system where the subject discipline continued to occupy a diminishing place with limited course offerings.

The initial wave of Canadian history initiatives was gradually superseded by a new movement championing "historical thinking", spearheaded by Peter Seixas and Penney Clark at UBC. Backed by Seixas's UBC Centre for Historical Consciousness and heavily influenced by the work of Sam Wineburg, a new model for teaching "historical thinking" was actively promoted, leading eventually to Benchmarks of Historical Thinking.[50] By then Canadian history advocates had discovered the World Wide Web and its enormous potential for engaging students in the study of historical issues and problems. One of the first such projects was a website, designed by John Lutz of the University of Victoria with Ruth Sandwell and carrying the improbable title "Who Killed William Robinson?" It attracted immediate attention, and was adopted in university and senior high school classes alike. Yet the Website also revealed a skills-deficit among students enrolled in history courses. "Students repeatedly identified the site as interesting and engaging," Sandwell reported, "but were at the same time frustrated and annoyed by the demands placed upon them ... to engage with the material." [51] Such discoveries gave rise to an expanded website series known as *Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History* and the most recent venture in history education networking, The History Education Network/Histoire et Education en Réseau (THEN/HiER). Like its predecessors, THEN/HiER aspired to lofty goals. The new network, Joel Schlesinger proclaimed in the March 2010 issue of *Teaching Canada's History*, is to build a community from elementary schools to universities, attempting to bridge "the disconnect between the ivory towers of academia and the classroom."[52]

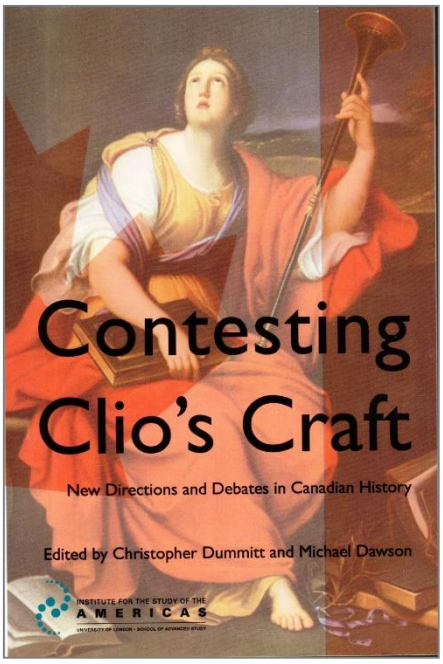
How much of all of this feverish activity actually penetrated the secondary school system? The Dominion Institute did conduct a national study of the Canadian high school history curriculum during the 2008-09 school year. *The Canadian History Report Card*, commissioned by the Ontario-based Institute and written by Bishop Strachan School history teacher J.D. M. Stewart, provided a detailed analysis of the official curriculum in each province and territory.[53] The first Canadian History Report Card reflected the known biases of its sponsor, the Dominion Institute. It focused on identifying discrete "history courses" and assessing provincial curricula in relation to the Ontario conception of history as a self-standing subject. Quebec ranked first with a B+, scoring 42 out of 50 points (84%), largely on the strength of requiring two full years of Quebec-Canada historical study before Grade 11 graduation. Only four provinces require students to take a Canadian history course before graduating, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia, and they were not only singled out, but fared better than the others. Provincial curricula was essentially benchmarked against the Ontario standard. [54]

After more than a decade of commissioning surveys, the Dominion Institute could legitimately claim to have dramatically raised public awareness of the so-called "national malaise about our past in Ottawa and Ontario's Queen's Park. Judging from the Report

Card, however, Stewart and the Institute expressed disappointment over the progress. "Provincial ministries of education", the Institute claimed, "must be held responsible for what they ask –or do not ask – their teachers to teach their students. It is clear from this curriculum analysis that high school students in Canada are not required to learn enough about their country's past." Critics of the Dominion Institute may quibble about its focus on the mastery of discrete facts, but that 2009 curriculum analysis demonstrated that the subject continued to be marginalized in Canadian high schools.[55]

Epilogue: Signs of Hope for the Future

The public debate over the place of history in the Ontario curriculum had by 2010 come almost full circle. A **youthful** and somewhat restless Trent University professor of Canadian history was among the first to break ranks in the historical profession. It all started in May 2007, in London, England. That recently-minted Assistant Professor, Christopher Dummitt, got together with a small group of others at the University of London and began asking a few troubling questions.[56] Where were the new syntheses to replace the all-but discredited "noble dream" narrative of Canada's history? After more than two decades, what had happened to the public concerns first voiced by two prominent public intellectuals, Michael Bliss and J.L. Granatstein, former titans now quietly derided as dinosaurs of the profession? Now that the "new social history" and "inclusiveness" reigned triumphant, what came next? And, while professing a new openness, how had academic historians come to be talking in a largely inaccessible language and mostly to each other?



In a thought-provoking 2009 article, "After Inclusiveness: The Future of Canadian History," he proclaimed the "History Wars" over and declared that "inclusive history" encompassing class, gender, and ethnicity had become "the new orthodoxy." A bottom-up, inclusive, "Peoples" history of Canada," he pointed out, "is now the standard version of Canadian history in the universities." Dummitt and his band of allies identified a major disconnect, plainly visible to high school teachers. On prime-time television, in theatres, on magazine stands, and even in bookstores, history enjoyed new-found popularity. Yet historians continued to produce mostly detailed, dry monographs and seemed intent upon fighting the same old battles. And perhaps more ironically, while the focus was on "inclusion," history was increasingly being written in a fashion which excluded the public.[57]

Dummitt was refreshingly frank in a field normally constrained by tribal loyalties. If Canadian history was at a crossroads, he claimed that it was because the academics had become increasingly stale and irrelevant to popular tastes. Few academic works sold more than 800 to 1,000 copies, while more engaging books by popularizers like Pierre Berton, Charlotte Gray, and Ken McGoogan continued to sell well. In Dummitt's own words, "the majority of the public is not with the professors." Such

revelations were not new to high school practitioners such as J.D. M. Stewart, but coming from a rising academic they sent out shock waves in the rather small Canadian history community. [58] Speaking at The History Education Network (THEN/HiER) Symposium, November 4, 2010, in Toronto, Dummitt, explained, in detail, the sources of the widening gap between academic history and the interests of the general public.[59] In *Contesting Clio's Craft*, Dummitt did not mince any words: Historians had gone overboard on social scientific research, seemingly "dissecting every little species and pinning them to the wall." [60] Instead of simply rendering visible and categorizing the species, he quipped that what historians needed was a "catch and release" strategy to rejuvenate the disciplinary field and recapture the hearts and minds of students.

The Canadian "History Wars" were essentially over by 2010 but many of the professors were still fighting old battles. Now that the older generation of warriors had all but left the field, Dummitt and his contemporaries were beginning to openly challenge the limitations of the new orthodoxy. Some like Ruth Sandwell and Peter Seixas chastised their academic colleagues for practicing teaching methods at odds with best practice in inquiry- based historical research.[6162] Rethinking Canadian history for the 21st century came to mean asking penetrating questions and seeking inventive ways of recapturing the reading public and reconnecting with those oft-forgotten high school history teachers. Popular magazines like *Canada's History/The Beaver* were finding a place in high school classrooms and leading the way in making history accessible to enthusiasts of all ages.[63] The History Education Network, spearheaded by Penny Clarke and the UBC Educational Studies Department, was in its infancy, but a "coherent conceptual framework" for teaching historical thinking was taking shape in the faculties of education.[64]

After four decades of the "new social history," the pendulum was swinging in a different direction. Most Ontario high school history teachers and new initiates (i.e. history undergraduates) had been longing for more accessible, readable books and articles that captured the "Big Story," addressed some of the recently neglected themes, and truly engaged the audience. There were signs that Canadian history was beginning to reconnect with what Dummitt aptly called "the town as well as the gown."[65] It was becoming fashionable again to stand up for the subject discipline as part of the essential core of a liberal education. Some were revisiting the critical issues raised in Bob Davis's *Whatever Happened to High School History?* Emboldened by Dummitt and a new generation of historians, they were even musing about whether the old "master narrative" was actually better than "no narrative at all."[66] Many secondary school practitioners, and a growing number of their university confreres, expressed the hope that the teaching of high school history was on the rebound.[67] Time would tell whether the convergence of forces would lead to a more accessible history education fully engaging Ontario high school students and better equipping them the historical thinking skills to help shape Canada's future.

Notes

[1] Paul W. Bennett, *Rediscovering Canadian History: A Teacher's Guide for the '80s* (Toronto: OISE Press, 1980), pp. 2-3 and 29-30. Originally published as a Teacher's Guide by the York County Board of Education, Division of Planning and Development (Aurora: YCBE, September 1979).

[2] Peter Seixas, "A Discipline Adrift in an 'Integrated Curriculum': History in British Columbia Schools," *Canadian Journal of Education,* Vol. 19, No. 1 (1994). See also Geoffrey Milburn, *Teaching History in Canada* (Scarborough: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972) for a number of earlier critiques.

[3] Ruth Sandwell, "School History Versus the Historians*," International Journal of Social Education*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2005), p. 10. For a much fuller exploration of the breakdown in consensus , see Ruth W. Sandwell, "Introduction," in Sandwell, ed., *To the Past: History Education, Public Memory and Citizenship in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), pp. 1-7.

[4] Jocelyn Letourneau, *A History for the Future: Rewriting Memory and History in Quebec* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), pp. 3-29.

[5] The pioneering works on teaching historical thinking are Sam Wineburg, "On the Reading of Historical Texts: Notes on the Breach between School and the Academy," *American Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (19910, pp. 495-519; and Peter Stearns, Peter Seixas, and Sam Weinburg, eds., *Knowing, Teaching and Learning History: National and International Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 2000). For new insights, see Penney Clark, "Introduction," and Clark and Peter Seixas, "Obsolete Icons and the Teaching of History," in Penney Clark, ed., *New Possibilities for the Past: Shaping History Education in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011)

[6] See Penney Clark, "Clio in the Curriculum: Vindicated at Last," *Canadian Issues* (Spring 2013), pp. 42-46.

[7] See *Contesting Clio's Craft: New Directions in Canadian History*, edited by Christopher Dummitt and Michael Dawson. London: UK: Institute for the Study of the Americas, University of London, 2009.

[8] Bob Davis, *Whatever Happened to High School History? Burying the Political Memory of Youth, Ontario: 1945-1995* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1995), pp. 33-34.

[9] Davis, *Whatever Happened to High School History?,* pp. 82-163, and 210-212.

[10] See Amy von Heyking, *Creating Citizens: History & Identity in Alberta's Schools, 1905 to 1980* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2006), pp. 5-6.

[11] On the triumph of Alberta social studies, see Von Heyking, pp. 53, 61-71, 108-10, 114, 128-9, 131-33, 140-2, and 149-50. See also von Heyking, "Selling Progressive Education to Albertans," *Historical Studies in Education,* Vol. 10, Nos. 1 &2 (Spring and Fall, 1998), pp. 67-84.

[12] *Living and Learning: The Report of the Provincial Committee on Aims and Objectives of Education in the Schools of Ontario* (Toronto: Ontario Department of Education, June 1968), pp. 9 and 21; and John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: Free Press, 1966), pp. 6, 8, 20, and 114.

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[43] See Davis, *Whatever Happened to High School History?*, pp. 18-19 and 97; and Davis, *Skills Mania*, p.70 and 71.

[44] Davis, Skills Mania, pp. 10-11, and 72-73. A clear defence of history's central place in liberal education is offered in Peter C. Emberley and Waller R. Newell, Bankrupt Education: The Decline of Liberal Education in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994). For a conflicting view, see Ken Osborne, *In Defence of History: Teaching the Past and the Meaning of Democratic Citizenship* (Toronto: Our Schools/Our Selves and James Lorimer, 1995).

[45] See Keith Spicer, Chairman's Report*, Citizen's Forum on Canada's Future* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1991), p. 9.

[46] The first Canadian History Quiz, conducted in May 1997 for the Dominion Institute by Angus Reid Group, released June 28, 1997. For the headline news coverage and editorials , see *The Toronto Star*, 1 July 1997; *The Calgary Herald*, 28 June 1997; *The Edmonton Journal*, 2 July 1997; and *The Ottawa Citizen* , 2 July 1997. See also Rudyard Griffiths*, Who We Are: A Citizen's Manifesto* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2009), pp. ix –xii.

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[52] See Heritage Canada and University of Victoria, *Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History,* http:// www.canadianmysteries.ca/en/about.php; and Joel Schlesinger, "Making Connections: THEN/HiER removing barriers between ivory tower and classrooms," *Teaching Canada's History/ Special Issue* (March 2010), p. 12.

[53] The Dominion Institute, *The Canadian History Report Card,* A Curriculum Analysis of High Schools in Canada, June 2009 (Toronto: Dominion Institute, 2009), pp. 2-3.

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[56] Dummitt and Dawson, eds., *Contesting Clio's Craft: New Directions and Debates in Canadian History*, vii.

[57] Dummitt, "After Inclusiveness: The Future of Canadian History," in Dummitt & Dawson, pp. 98-103.

[58] Dummitt, "After Inclusiveness," p. 103. For a similar critique, see J.D. M. Stewart, "We Need to Peel Back the Curtain on Our History," *The Globe and Mail*, 4 August 2010. See also Stewart, "Ten Days That Changed Canada," Workshop Presentation, Ontario History and Social Science Teachers' Association Conference, 7 November 2008; and Rudyard Griffiths, "Prying Apart Canada's Civic Compact," *The National Post*, 19 June 2008; and *Who We Are,* pp. xi-xv.

[59] Christopher Dummit, Public Lecture, "After Inclusiveness: The Future of Canadian History, THEN/HiER Symposium, "Teaching Canada in Diverse Contexts," 4 November 2010.

[60] Dummitt, "After Inclusiveness," pp. 119-20

[62] Ruth Sandwell, "To the History Undergraduates," p. 13; and Seixas, "The Purposes of Teaching History," pp. 1-2 and 5-8. A prime example of recent advances in teaching practice is *Exemplars in Historical Thinking: 20th*

Century Canada (Vancouver: TC2 – Critical Thinking Consortium, 2009), introduced in *Rapport,* Journal of the Ontario History and Social Science Teachers' Association (Winter 2009), pp. 5-10.

[63] *The Beaver,* now *Canada's History*, is widely read by history buffs, teachers, students, and historians with a popular interest. With the publication of *100 Photos That Changed Canada* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2009), editor Mark Reid is tapping into an even wider audience.

[64] Annual Report, Year One, *The History Education Network/Histoire et Education en Reseau* (THEN/HiER), April 2009; and Clark, "Clio in the Classroom," 2013, p. 43.

[65] Dummitt, "After Inclusiveness," p. 122. For a prime example of telling the "Big Story" well and in engaging fashion, see Margaret MacMillan, *The Uses and Abuses of History* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2008).

[66] Davis, Skills Mania, pp. 10-11, and 72-73. A clear defence of history's central place in liberal education is offered in Peter C. Emberley and Waller R. Newell, Bankrupt Education: The Decline of Liberal Education in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994). For a conflicting view, see Ken Osborne, *In Defence of History: Teaching the Past and the Meaning of Democratic Citizenship* (Toronto: Our Schools/Our Selves and James Lorimer, 1995).

[67] Renewed optimism was expressed in Clark, "Clio in the Classroom," 2013, pp. 42-46; and in Ruth Sandwell and Amy von Heyking, eds., *Becoming a History Teacher: Sustaining Practices in Historical Thinking and Knowing* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).