

## COMMUNICATIONS

### *Foreign Teachers*

From time to time during the last few years, reservations and even concern have been expressed about the employment of foreign teachers by local school boards. These reservations have not always been grounded in the same reasons but they have tended to support one another. Some three years ago *The Edmonton Journal* reported that the Chief Superintendent of Schools had expressed concern about the possible harmful influence of teachers from overseas. Parents, particularly parents with children in Division I grades, have worried about the presence of foreigners in classrooms. In December 1968, the hiring policies of the Northland School Division were questioned. Under the headline 'Number of Foreign Teachers Criticized,' we read,

Northland has recruited teachers from the United Kingdom, Australia, the United States and the Philippines. Most are from the U. K.

Mr. Thomas said that for such persons, there are problems of adjustment, and this 'detracts from a meaningful education and parent-teacher relationship with the community.'<sup>1</sup>

This is not a new concern in Alberta. In 1907, School Inspector G. E. Ellis was inclined to designate anyone not from Alberta and Saskatchewan as 'an outsider' and thus unsuitable for teaching in the province. His position was shared by Inspector Loucks who in 1909 reported that "the teachers from the Eastern Provinces find it difficult to adapt themselves to the Course of Study, and a few of them do not try, as they are persuaded that their way is best."<sup>2</sup> Within a year, Inspector E. L. Hill echoed the opinion of his colleagues.

Among the teachers trained elsewhere, particularly those trained outside the Dominion, I have found a number who seem to have little appreciation of pedagogical values. Their methods have been found defective, their attention to details weak, and their adaptability and resourcefulness surprisingly poor.<sup>3</sup>

In the same year, Inspector H. R. Parker noted that "some few teachers from the British Isles retain their native accent to such a degree that pupils have much difficulty in understanding them."<sup>4</sup>

All the above charges against foreign teachers were made on grounds of classroom competence. But there are frequently more than mere

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<sup>1</sup>*The Edmonton Journal*, Dec. 11, 1968, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup>*Annual Report*, Department of Education, 1909, p. 50.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 1910, p. 47.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 67.

methodological considerations involved in such criticisms. Indeed, political, economic and religious issues are so bound up with pedagogical ones as to be virtually inseparable. Occasionally, these very real issues are not allowed to come to the surface and resentment takes the form of nothing more or less than blatant prejudice. All these factors, not excluding, unhappily, the last, are clearly apparent in the recent demands by two Carleton University professors that a quota be placed on the hiring of staff from the United States. Not once has the purely professional competence of these 'outsiders' been seriously questioned.

Both in private conversations and through the mass media, concern continues to be expressed about the possible undesirable influence being exerted by non-Canadian professors and graduate teaching assistants. The presence of apparently large numbers of foreigners among the more radical and activist elements on campuses across the country have lent a certain credence to complaints about the geographical origins of those whom the tax-payer so handsomely pays to undertake the education of the country's youth.

When considering an issue as highly charged with emotion as this one, it is sometimes useful and always instructive to look into the past where one will assuredly find that the problem is not new. Antagonism against foreign teachers has had a long history, and seems to be associated with societies experiencing a period of intense nationalism and rapid societal change. Invariably, it is voiced by those who lament the tearing down of the old order and deplore particularly the destruction wreaked by outsiders.

Athens of the Periclean period provides such an example. Cyril E. Robinson writes:

Now it can hardly have escaped the reader's notice that, among all the philosophers of whom we have spoken, not one hailed from Athens. . . . Almost everywhere, but especially Magna Grecia and Asia Minor, there were individuals to be found who called themselves Sophists or teachers of wisdom and who professed to be able to give lessons in wellnigh every subject under the sun. . . .

We have already observed that among the names of either sophists or philosophers hitherto mentioned no true Athenian born has yet appeared. One such, however, there was . . . and his name was Socrates. . . . The charge which brought Socrates to his death, and which had been equally levelled against the whole sophist class, was that 'they led youth astray;' and there can be little doubt that from the point of view of the normal man the charge was in the main true. . . .

Protest, of course, was not lacking. Aristophanes . . . , the great comic poet of the age and the regular mouthpiece of conservative opinion, was for ever denouncing the man who 'made the worse appear the better cause', and who filled the hot-bath-house and emptied the wrestling school and trained up a generation of narrow-chested windbags in succession to the stout old heroes of Marathon and Salamis.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Cyril E. Robinson, *A History of Greece* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1935), pp. 174-179.

Such was the danger of having "red-haired things of unknown breed"<sup>6</sup> in one's midst.

Rome, while undergoing the birth-pangs of its new Graeco-Roman culture, experienced a similar outburst of resentment against foreign teachers. As early as 161 B.C., the senate passed a decree giving the praetor power to expel teachers of philosophy and rhetoric from the city. The ineffectiveness of this attempt to preserve the *mos maiorum* is evidenced by the popularity of the public lectures given by Carneades, Diogenes and Critolaus, who came to Rome as ambassadors from Athens some six years later.

The young flocked to his [Carneades'] lectures, 'Plutarch tells us,' and the rumour went abroad that a magician had come to the city, capable of winning the youth of Rome away from all other pleasures in their enthusiasm for philosophy.<sup>7</sup>

Conservatives (particularly Cato) were horrified, and proposed that the ambassadors be replaced by less dangerous men.

With the conquest of Greece and Asia Minor, numbers of formally educated Greeks were brought to Rome as war slaves. Many of these were or quickly became teachers. Mulherne writes,

Below all these [plebeians, merchants and nobles] stood the slaves, who were few in the Native Period [to 600 B.C.], but who numbered millions in Rome and Italy from the third century B.C. onward, every war bringing its new quota of slaves into Roman society. The prices paid for slaves on the Roman market ran from \$100. for a laborer to \$28,000. for a grammarian. Eventually, all manual occupations and some professions, such as medicine and teaching, came to be, in varying degrees, in the hands of foreigners, slaves, and ex-slaves.<sup>8</sup>

The role played by Aristophanes in Athens was well played by Cato in Rome. He was the main spokesman for the conservative segment of society and the chief opponent of Greek ideas which, he felt, were sapping the life-blood of all that was best in the Roman heritage. The foreign professionals were a particular object of attack. The Greek 'medicos,' insisted Cato, "have sworn to slay all foreigners [Romans] by the use of medicine, . . . and this very thing they do for pay."<sup>9</sup> Nor was the influence of Greek teachers any less harmful to the wellbeing of Rome. "Wherever that nation [Greece] shall bestow its learning," warned Cato, "it will corrupt all things."<sup>10</sup>

Such extreme opinions were not uncommon in Rome and, as was noted, they resulted in the senate issuing the decree designed to expel

<sup>6</sup>Quoted by Thomas Woody, *Life and Education in Early Societies* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1956), p. 181.

<sup>7</sup>Audrey Gwynn, *Roman Education from Cicero to Quintilian* (New York: Teachers' College, Columbia University, 1962), p. 39.

<sup>8</sup>Jame Mulherne, *A History of Education* (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1956), p. 181.

<sup>9</sup>Quoted by Adolphe E. Meyer, *An Educational History of the Western World* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1965), p. 51.

<sup>10</sup>Quoted *Ibid*, p. 50.

Greek teachers from that city. Aulus Gellus, at a somewhat later date, recorded that

some years after this decree of the senate Cn. Domitus Ahenobarbus and L. Licinius Crassus, the censors, issued this edict on the suppression of Latin rhetoricians:

'It has been reported to us that there are men who have established a new kind of training, and that our youth is going to them; that they have granted themselves the title of Latin rhetoricians; that in their schools young men spend whole days in idleness. Our ancestors have established what they would have our children learn and to what schools they would have them go. These new teachings, which are being given against the usage and custom of our ancestors, do not meet with approval, nor do they seem right. Wherefore it has seemed necessary that, to those who conduct those schools, and to those who have been in the habit of going to them, we declare our opinion that they do not meet with our approval.'

Not only in those very rude times when the people were not yet refined by Greek training were philosophers driven from the city of Rome, but while Domitian was emperor by a decree of the senate they were ejected from the city and from Italy and forbidden to return. At that time Epictetus, the philosopher, owing to that decree went from Rome to Nicopolis.<sup>11</sup>

A final group of examples from a more recent period will serve to demonstrate the basic similarity of such outbursts of resentment against foreign teachers. In the late eighteenth century, the increased affluence of the English middle classes attracted a number of teachers from France, all of whom found ready employment in Young Ladies' Boarding Schools or in families as masters and governesses. The inevitable complaints of their 'pernicious influence' were soon being voiced.

It was true, pointed out one critic, that the French governess often taught effectively "the language of that country"; more to the point, however, she poisoned the girls' minds "with popery in the bargain."<sup>12</sup> Another writer commented that French teachers "have been for the most part servants in some of the provinces in France, and disliking servitude in their own country, seek it in a more respectable line of life, that of a French teacher in a boarding school." It was scarcely surprising, therefore, that they were unable to communicate effectively in English, were unduly harsh with their students, and, like most servants, stole from their employers whenever the opportunity arose.<sup>13</sup>

With the influx of some 40,000 emigres during the French Revolution and the subsequent declaration of war, the number of criticisms of French influence in education increased markedly. Miss Mitford, recalling this period, wrote,

Something wonderful and admirable it was to see how these Dukes and Duchesses, Marshalls and Marquises, Chevaliers and Bishops bore up under their unparalleled reverses! . . . Very many lived literally on the produce

<sup>11</sup>George Howe & Gustave A. Harrer, *Roman Literature in Translation* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1924), p. 68.

<sup>12</sup>*The London Magazine*, Vol. XLV (August, 1776), p. 397.

<sup>13</sup>Anonymous, *The Governess; or, The Boarding School Dissected* (London: The Female Academy, 1785), p. 61 ff.

of their own industry; the gentlemen teaching languages, music, fencing, dancing; while their wives and daughters went out as teachers or governesses.<sup>14</sup>

Few writers of the period were as charitable in their remarks as Miss Mitford. The emigres were, of course, the victims and enemies of an atheistic tyranny and, as such, to be pitied and even commended. But they were also Roman Catholic and, perhaps worse, French, bringing with them all the errors and vices of their country's religion and aristocracy. To allow them into schools and homes where they could not fail to influence young Englishwomen was to invite the corruption of youth. Moreover, they were filling positions which rightfully belonged to English gentlewomen in distress and helping to depress salaries.

It was at this time that the French governess became something of a stock villain in literature.<sup>15</sup> Hannah More's warning of the dangers involved in hiring French teachers was typical. They were "foreigners, of whose principles they [the parents] knew nothing, except that they were Roman Catholics."<sup>16</sup> Miss Hatfield, a successful novelist, was even more outspoken in her criticisms of French teachers. ". . . their personal indelicacy, conversation, and lack of manners," she insisted, "ought to exclude them from every establishment appropriate to the education of youth."<sup>17</sup> France, lamented a clergyman, "has infected many other countries of Europe, but, particularly, our own, and overwhelmed them, at least, with a deluge of frivolity, if not of crimes."<sup>18</sup>

Despite all the warnings and complaints, the foreign teachers continued to be in great demand. And, in fact, this was the case in Athens and in Rome. In none of these periods were the efforts of conservatives successful, either in stopping the influx of foreign teachers or, more importantly, in preventing the breakup of the social order they were striking so hard to maintain intact.

The examples discussed above suggest two important generalizations about foreign teachers and the resentment they arouse. First, the presence of large numbers of foreign teachers seems to indicate a failure or inability of a nation to meet adequately the educational needs of a significant proportion of its people in a period of rapid societal change. Secondly, the 'outsider,' no matter what his personal or pro-

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<sup>14</sup>Quoted by F. J. Harvey Darton (editor), *The Life and Times of Mrs. Sherwood (1775-1851)*. (London: Wells, Gardner, Darton & Co., 1910), p. 123.

<sup>15</sup>See, for example, Maria Edgeworth, *Mademoiselle Panache*, in *Tales & Novels* (London: George Routledge & Sons, n. d.), pp. 360-410, and John Correy, *The Unfortunate Daughter; or the Danger of the Modern System of Female Education* (London: B. Crosby & Co., 1803).

<sup>16</sup>Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) *The Works of Hannah More* (London: D. Graisberry, 1803), Vol. IV, p. 56.

<sup>17</sup>Miss Hatfield, *Letters on the Importance of the Female Sex: With Observations on their Manners and on Education* (London: J. Adlard, 1803), p. 75.

<sup>18</sup>A Clergyman of the Church of England. (Reverend John Bennet), *Strictures on Female Education: chiefly as it Relates to the Culture of the Heart* (London: T. Cadell, c. 1780), p. 51.

fessional qualifications, presents a most inviting target for those who view with distaste and even horror the effects of social change. The symptom, in fact, is singled out and attacked as the cause of the ills that are held to be plaguing society.

In a period of active nationalism such as we are now experiencing throughout the world, it is quite likely that the presence of foreign teachers in classrooms and universities will continue to arouse resentment. If such should prove to be the case, it is perhaps worth remembering that, historically at least, foreign teachers have never yet *caused* the moral and intellectual decay of a society; on the contrary, they have often enriched not only the content and methodology of formal education but the whole culture.

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