Days of Action of Rally. North Bay, Ontario, November 27, 1997. Photo: David Smiley

The Abandonment of the Pursuit of Equity

by Patricia McAdie

L'auteure a tenu un journal tout le temps de sa participation à un cours sur la santé et la guérison qui impliquait le corps, à la fois comme une composante du cours et comme pédagogie.

"Pearson's administration wove the fabric of Canada's social safety in response to a surge in populist activism. The notion that equality—overriding differences of region, income, age, and gender—should form a base for social policy was taking deep root."

While women have made progress towards equal status, this progress has stalled. Some would say that we have been slipping backwards over the last few years.

The experiences in Ontario, particularly since the election of the Conservative government on June 8, 1995, have been very demonstrative of a backlash, not just against women, but against everyone not currently in a position of authority and power. This government's onslaught has been felt in every aspect of our society. Some of the effects of this onslaught include:

- increased poverty for the most vulnerable women;
- increased poverty for children;
- deteriorating living conditions for the population as a whole;
- deteriorating housing conditions and increased homelessness;
- a loss of autonomy for the disabled;
- continued barriers to employment for women, and in particular women of colour, Aboriginal women, and women with disabilities, or their confinement to job ghettos with no opportunity for promotion;
- increased family violence;
- increased unemployment;
- deteriorating health and well-being of women;
- deteriorating working conditions for women;
- further erosion of the environment;
- increased workload for women due to the cuts in health and social services;
- increased vulnerability, dependency, and domination of women; and
- a weakened education system, moving more to a two-tier system.

How did we get to this point?

Canada—the development of the social welfare state[1]

The Depression was a terrible time in Canada. Experiences during the 1930s shaped the country for the decades to follow.

> On the eve of the great financial crash of 1929, the two competing ideologies would meet head to head in their struggle to influence the development of Canadian social policy: on one side, individual initiative, free enterprise, private charities and families providing for those in need; on the other, the belief that Canadians were becoming deeply divided by class, and only collective action, backed by proactive government intervention to ensure equality of opportunity and social rights, could eradicate chronic poverty, disease, and want. This ideology was fermenting in slums, in universities, on the factory floor, in mines and lumber camps, at rural revival meetings, in churches and kitchens. It would become the major influence on social policy development in the terrible years ahead, anticipating the concept of universal social rights, and forever changing the way Canadians live and work together. (Barlow and Campbell 13–14)

The beginning of World War II brought incredible relief, as suddenly there were enough jobs to go around. Women were being encouraged to enter the labour force to help with the war effort. There was even an attempt at a national child care program. While the experience of the war was devastating in many ways, it gave people a hope that they had not experienced for quite some time. It also gave Canadians a sense of social pride and justice.

The late 1950s brought an economic downturn and increasing unemployment. The Liberals were defeated federally in 1957–58. By the time they were re-elected in 1963, the country had changed.

> Pearson's administration wove the fabric of Canada's social safety net in response to a sudden surge in populist activism. Advocacy groups—for tenants, the poor, seniors, consumers, aboriginal people, and farmers—sprang up everywhere. They demanded citizen participation and democratic involvement in the creation of programs affecting them. The notion that equality—overriding differences of region, income, age, and gender—should form a fundamental base for social policy was taking deep root. (Barlow and Campbell 27)

The social programs that were developed during the

and the Implications for Education

1960s helped to define Canada's sense of self. The principles of social equality, full employment, national standards, and democratic participation dominated the political arena, at least for men.

Almost as soon as the social safety net had been woven, its dismantling began. Over the course of the next two decades, business interests successfully lobbied to lower their taxes and to create an unstable workforce. This lobby has been so successful that we now have a system that ensures record profits at the same time as stagnant or decreasing wages and high levels of unemployment. The policy of the Bank of Canada to fight inflation by increasing interest rates, even though Canada's inflation rate was among the lowest in the major industrialized countries, has had a very chilling effect on employment and wages.[2] However, unlike the reaction to the Depression of the 1930s, social programs are now being dismantled. The argument is that they are too expensive, that they are outdated, that they were developed for a different time. The reality is that a very small portion of the debt can be attributed to spending on social programs, about six per cent (McQuaig). However, big business interests, fuelled by the media, seem to be overtaking the agenda. The effect is that this dismantling of social programs is ensuring the instability of the majority of the population of Canada. We seem to have truly abandoned the pursuit of the just society in Canada. We can only hope that this is only a temporary deviation from our noble history.

Almost as soon as the social safety net had been woven, its dismantling began. Over the course of the next two decades, business interests successfully lobbied to lower their taxes and to create an unstable workforce.

Education and equity

Where does education fit in to this history? By its very nature, formal education has rarely been a means of social change, but more a sign of the times. In Ontario, the release of two government documents, *Living and Learning* in 1968 and *The Formative Years* in 1975, were key. Both advocated a more humane approach to education. The emphasis was on individualized progress, rather than a rigid adherence to grade-level advancements and retention. The goal was to provide a more inclusive approach to education. Somewhat ironically, an emphasis on the individual student allowed for a greater degree of equality in education; an emphasis on the individual meant that everyone was more likely to achieve to her or his full potential, not based on expectations or performance of one segment of the population.

However, this early emphasis on equality did not include girls and women. "[*Living and Learning*] talked about equality for all people—except women. The entire book was written with male pronouns" (Labatt 105).

The early stages of this education reform were based on an equality of opportunity model. The belief was that if everyone was given an equal opportunity to acquire the same education, then we should have a more equal society. Unfortunately, the corollary of this was that if you did not achieve as well as others, then the individual must somehow be deficient.

Over time, the language changed from equality of opportunity to equality of results and ultimately to our current thinking on equity.

> "Equity" is a genuinely new idea, one that has evolved in response to both frustration and insight. For those who have worked over many years for the cherished goal of "equality of opportunity," frustration has centred on the persistence of unequal results in women's lives despite their apparently more equal opportunities. At the same time, those who have worked for "equality of result" have become increasingly sensitive to criticisms that their notion of equality is both rigid and mechanistic, apparently implying that girls and boys, women and men, (abled and disabled, whites and women of colour, natives and non-natives ...) should end up somehow "the same...."
>
> [T]he idea of equity intends to warn us that equality of opportunity may be an empty formality if it does not engage with difference, and that equality of outcome may be an excuse to ignore differences which are actually strengths.
>
> In other words, equity is an active, interventionist concept—demanding an in-depth understanding of difference, a willingness to make space for it in institutions like schools, and a refusal to allow it to act as a barrier to any of life's goods and pleasures. (Stevenson 1–3)

If our society were equitable, then we should not see a concentration of wealth or other resources within one group of individuals defined by characteristics such as sex, race, or religious background. This must be at the root of any discussion about equity.

Throughout this section, information will be provided for the labour force in general, as well as information about teachers. It is important to examine the situation of women teachers for two reasons. One is as a specific example of the equitable treatment of women in our society. The second reason, however, relates to the education system itself. If women teachers are not in an equitable situation within education, how can we hope to teach our students any differently. We cannot hope to change the education of girls and boys if sexism continues within the teaching profession.

One measure of the distribution of resources in our society is income. The earnings ratio of female to male full-time, full-year workers is the most commonly used measure of the wage gap between men and women. In the early to mid-1970s, this ratio hovered up and down around 60 per cent, with minor movements above and below this level. Between 1977 and 1993, there was a slow but steady improvement in this ratio, going from 62 per cent in 1977 to 72 per cent in 1993. However, the 1994 earnings ratio showed an increase in the gap, going back down to a ratio of 69.8 per cent (Statistics Canada 1995).[3] Improvements in women's wages from the late 1980s are at least partially attributable to pay equity. Does the decrease in 1994 signal an abandonment of this commitment?

Education Rally. North Bay, Ontario, September 26, 1997. Photo: David Smiley

Wages are lower for women for a number of reasons. We have had equal pay for equal work laws in Canada since the 1950s. Pay equity, or equal pay for work of equal value, through legislation and negotiations, has been in place in many parts of Canada since the late 1980s. This has helped to improve the wages of women to some extent, but, as we have seen, women's wages remain lower than men's wages. It is suggested that this is at least partly due to women being employed in lower-paying jobs. However, women's salaries are lower than men's within every occupation category (CTF 1996).

Salaries for female and male teachers are not equal. As in every other profession, the salaries for women teachers are lower. Pay equity in Ontario, effective January 1990 for teachers, has helped to decrease this difference. The ratio of the average salary for women and men elementary teachers went from 79 per cent in 1985 to 80 per cent in 1989 then jumped to 87 per cent in 1995 (OTF).

Even within a profession, women and men do not work at the same levels. This is nowhere more obvious than in teaching. Women make up a large majority of all teachers in Canada. However, women are very underrepresented in administrative positions. In Ontario in 1995, approximately one out of 21 women at the public elementary level holds a position of added responsibility, while approximately one out of five men hold a position of added responsibility (FWTAO 1995). In 1986–87, the comparable figures were one out of 40 women and one out four men (FWTAO 1987). While progress has been made, there is still a clear distinction in the roles that women and men play in the school system.

The fact remains that a wage gap still exists. If it is attributable to differing education levels, then we must ask why men have had more access to higher education. If it is attributable to experience, then we must ask why men have more experience. If the gap persists, then perhaps we need to ask why our society rewards in the form of higher income those attributes that are more common in men than in women.

How has the education system influenced progress towards a more equitable society?

What happens with girls in school is often very subtle. Myra and David Sadker state: "The classroom consists of two worlds: one of boys in action, the other of girls' inaction" (42). They describe a role-play exercise they conduct at workshops on sexism in classrooms; two men and two women are asked to role-play Grade 5 students while David Sadker plays the teacher. Throughout the exercise, the "teacher" all but ignores the "girls," giving the vast majority of his attention to the "boys." It is quite amazing how the women and men slip into their roles learned from childhood classroom experience. If girls and boys are treated differently in school, why would they think that adult life will be any different? If girls are taught that their role is to be passive observers, while the boys are taught to be actors, why would anyone think that it would be different when they leave school?

One of the first things that young children experience at school is a different role for men and women. Women are overwhelmingly in the classrooms, while administrators, those in positions of authority, are more likely to be men. Even within the classrooms, there is a difference in where women and men teach. Overall, women were 62 per cent of all full-time teachers in Ontario in 1993–94. However, women were 74 per cent of all full-time elementary teachers (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training 1995). Women teachers are disproportionately represented in the lower grade levels. Almost 100 per cent of the

kindergarten teachers in the Ontario public school system are female. This ratio decreases to under 40 per cent for Grade 13 teachers (Ontario Minister of Education and Training).

There is a kind of double discrimination at work here. Young children see women as their main caregivers. Older students increasingly see men involved in their instruction. All students are more likely to see men making the authoritative decisions that run the school. When they read about boys in their early story books, read about men in their history books, hear stories about men on the news, watch television programs that focus on men as the serious

Liz Barkley, Past President of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. North Bay, September 26, 1997. Photo: David Smiley

actors in our society, children are learning that men are to be taken more seriously than women. If they see more women teaching them when they are young, should that be seen as a sign that young children, whatever their gender, are not as important as older children and adults?

The resources for educating older students are greater than the resources for educating younger students. In Ontario, the average per-pupil expenditure in 1993 by public boards on elementary students was $6,506 while for secondary students they spent $8,111. The grant structure in Ontario reinforces this disparity, providing $4,034 per elementary student and $4,966 per secondary student for recognized ordinary expenditures in 1993. The Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario (FWTAO) has argued for years that there is no valid justification for the gap in per-pupil funding for elementary and secondary students. Yet the gap remains.[4]

It is difficult to convince children that they are all equally important and worthy when they are treated unequally. Children are not blind to such subtle differences. In addition, the social environment that they are learning in makes a difference.

> If we want to empower girls as students, we have to empower women as educators and caretakers. Otherwise, our attempts to win sex equality will be futile, for the contradictions of people working in unequal hierarchies of power will speak louder than the equality they might try to achieve for others. (Gaskell *et al.* 63)

Identifying the barriers to educating for equality has been one area of extensive research conducted in the last couple of decades. Much work has been done on the issue of girls' absence in fiction and non-fiction materials for children. In 1975, FWTAO commissioned an initial study of readers approved for use by the Ministry of Education in the junior grades (Grades 4 to 6) in Ontario schools. In order to be recommended by the authors, a series of readers would have to present a numerical balance of female and male characters, contain characters of quality, present worthwhile story plots and a breadth of human activities and occupations, and contain Canadian topics. Based on this analysis, none of the series was wholeheartedly recommended, and only one series of readers on the list was recommended with reservation (Batcher *et al.* 1975). Eleven years later, in a follow-up study the researchers were forced to conclude: "Sex equity did not exist in Readers in 1975 and it does not exist now. Therefore, no series is recommended" (Batcher *et al.* 1987, 27).

While some non-sexist and inclusionary materials have been developed, school boards are not overwhelmingly adopting them for use and teachers are rarely being provided the assistance needed to select such learning materials (Soucie).

Based on research in Ontario, Judi Stevenson points out the lack of equity issues in teacher education, both pre-service and in-service.

> The evidence from Ontario suggests that almost none have been exposed to the topic [of gender as an issue in education] in even a perfunctory way during pre-service training. And in terms of in-service work, the very best that happens is that equity issues compete with a formidable array of other pressing matters for teacher attention. (25)

Research by Myra and David Sadker among others show that girls are silenced in the classroom.

> The students most likely to receive teacher attention were white males; the second most likely were minority males; the third, white females; and the least likely, minority females. In elementary school, receiving attention from the teacher is enormously important for a student's achievement and self-esteem. (50)

Furthermore, women are still underrepresented in certain segments in higher education, particularly engineering and applied sciences, and mathematics and physical sciences. But what about girls in math, science, and technology courses in elementary and secondary schools? There is evidence that boys and girls do not take the same

subjects as they are given choices at the secondary school level (Robertson). However, research indicates that it is not a simple question of encouraging more girls to enrol in such classes. Some have suggested that it is difficult to encourage girls and young women to enter such fields as engineering when they know that they would be encouraging the girls and women to enter fields that remain sexist.

> Science is still used to solve problems as they are set by the dominant interests of every culture, most of them male, expansionist and military. Had those interests framed health and well-being or the preservation of our environment as priorities, our planet might be very different. The "research agenda" of western science is accused of neglecting women's concerns, from silicone implants to breast cancer. Enough has been said about the common language used to describe Nintendo, the Gulf War and the Superbowl to ensure easy recognition that technological triumph and testosterone are hardly strangers.
>
> This kind of observation requires us to ask not just "what is it about girls that keeps them away from science?" but "what is it about science—and the teaching of science—which excludes girls?" (Robertson 7–8)

Cuts divert attention away from equity issues. It becomes more difficult to ensure that girls are allowed to participate fully. If there is less money for professional development, teachers will be less able to improve their understanding of equity issues.

There are many other factors that influence girls' and women's lives, both inside and outside of the education system, such as violence against women, sexual harassment, and body image. Schools and teachers need to become more aware of these issues and become more proactive in working with their students (and colleagues). It does no one any good to ignore these issues.

What are the current trends in education? How will they influence the pursuit of equity?

Since 1991, funding for education across Canada has declined. The effects that this has had on education are becoming clear. Class sizes are increasing; preparation time for teachers is being eroded; professional development opportunities for teachers are being reduced; consultants and coordinators are not being replaced when they leave a school board; less money is available for general education resources. These cutbacks have a number of direct and indirect impacts on the pursuit of equity. In teacher bargaining in Ontario, many of the settlements over the last few years have been for status quo agreements. This means that bargaining issues of importance to women teachers, such as improved maternity leave provisions, sexual harassment clauses, and improved health and safety clauses, among others, are being put aside. In some areas, concessions are being demanded and agreed to. The unpaid days imposed on teachers in Ontario and Manitoba usually decreased the number of professional development days provided to teachers throughout the year.

All of these cuts divert attention away from equity issues. If there are more students in the class, teachers have a more difficult time ensuring that everyone is progressing as they should be. As we have seen, boys generally receive more attention in class; if there are more students in each class, it becomes more difficult for teachers to ensure that the girls are allowed to participate fully. If there is less time and money for professional development, teachers will be less able to improve their understanding of equity issues. If there is less money for new learning materials, it is less likely that a school board will be able to purchase new non-biased materials with better representations of girls and women, boys and men. It is simply becoming more difficult to pursue a more equitable distribution of resources.

> The creation of equal opportunity for female students in schools has a price tag. More and better materials have to be developed and purchased; staff training and retraining are necessary; research needs to be done on girl-friendly curricula; positive workshop models must be developed for parents and teachers so that both school and home can give students a consistent message about the goal of equality for women in society; leadership programmes for female students and staff as well as curriculum that supports nurturing behaviour in males and male acceptance of a wide range of opportunities for girls need to be developed, tested and implemented. (Gaskell *et al.* 39)

In Ontario and many other provinces, school boards are being or have been amalgamated. Beginning January 1998, Ontario's school boards will be cut in half. Those few boards that were more able or more likely to pursue progressive policies will find it increasingly difficult. Not only will they have less money, but they will now have to convince a different group of trustees and senior administrators that such policies are worth pursuing.

In addition, how are decisions around program cuts being made? "They took gymnastics away from school but left football in" (Edwards 18). It is hard not to conclude that the existing values in our society are simply being reinforced in this situation.

In the last number of years, there has been an increasing interest in what have been referred to as "market approaches" to education. Such issues as charter schools and

the more general movement for educational choice have very serious drawbacks with regards to equity.[5]

Educational choice, being able to "freely" choose which school to attend, has been advocated by some as a means of reducing inequities. It is argued that inferior schools can be avoided, giving those normally in the neighbourhood of the school the ability to attend better, "richer" schools in other neighbourhoods. What is missing from this analysis, however, is that not everyone is able to exercise the same level of choice.

An international study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on school choice found that there was a disproportionate use of choice by families who are already relatively well-off. In order to be able to exercise complete freedom to choose which school to attend, families usually have to be able to provide transportation, or have the ability to relocate to the appropriate neighbourhood. This is rarely seen as a viable option for the majority of parents.

One problem with school choice is similar to one of the problems in dealing with violence against women. It is still largely the woman's responsibility to try to eliminate the violence in her life, either in the home or in the court. With school choice, it is left up to the parents to ensure that they enrol in the appropriate school. That is, it is an individual's responsibility. Wouldn't it be more democratic to make it the responsibility of the education system to ensure that all students receive an appropriate, high-quality education? As the OECD study points out, higher student mobility can have very serious impacts on the education system.

Education Rally. North Bay, Ontario, September 26, 1997. Photo: David Smiley

> This is particularly true where schools' resources are directly linked to enrolment. If a public school loses 10 per cent of its pupil intake and therefore 10 per cent of its revenue, the impact is usually severe, as a class with 27 pupils does not cost less to teach than one with 30. The incentive for schools to compete for pupils under open enrolment rules is therefore usually great. (OECD 23)

Charter schools, or "grant-maintained" schools as they are called in Britain, are a specific method of exercising choice. Charter schools act independently of the school board in which they are located, receiving their funding directly from the ministry or department of education. The school receives a "charter" that allows it to operate essentially as a private school in a public system. Proponents of such schools argue that this kind of arrangement provides the most choice for parents. However, charter schools, by definition, have more homogenous school populations. Equity must not be confused with a narrow definition of equality. A homogenous student population would have more difficulty teaching about diversity.

Some have suggested that charter schools for girls would help to overcome some of the difficulties that female stu-dents encounter in the regular, integrated school system, helping to ensure that they do not lose self-esteem. However, it has been argued that diversity must be a key com-ponent of equity if we want to effect real change. In addition, it assumes the only problem lies in the schools, that somehow the rest of society can be let off the hook.

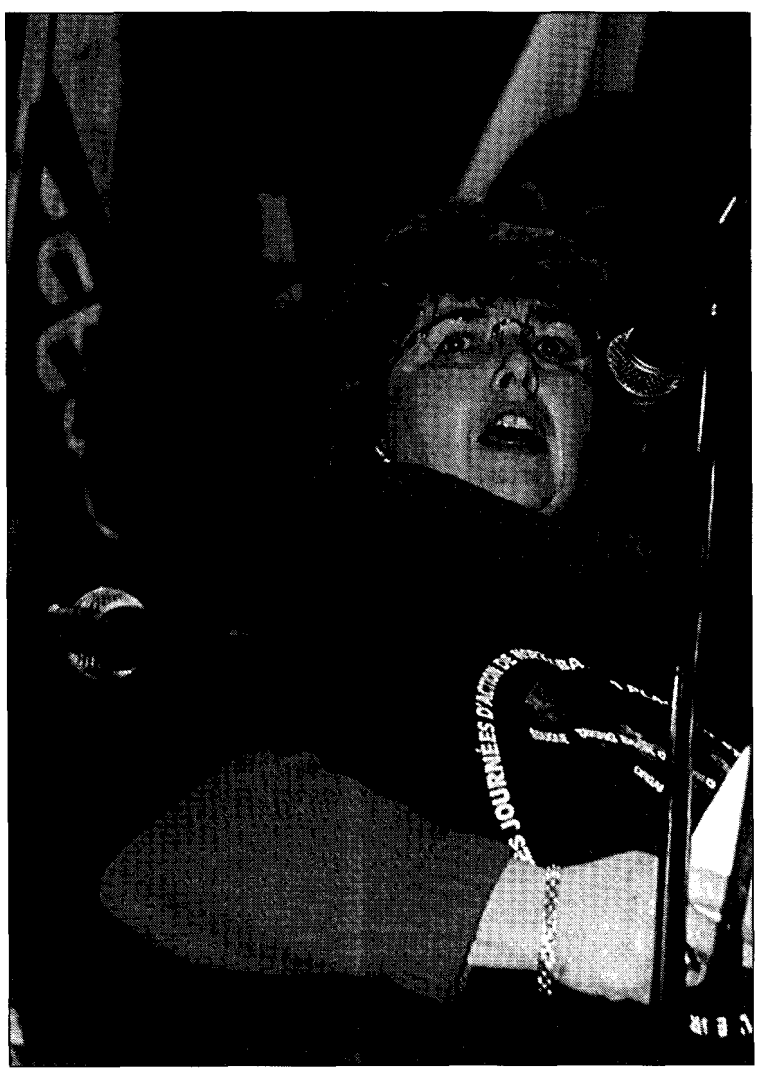
> For many, the most obvious answer to the problems of absence and voice is the creation of girls-only classes and schools, and there is ample evidence that single-sex settings benefit young women's academic and personal development.... Yet it is enormously discouraging to conclude that the only setting in which female development can be nurtured is one in which males are absent. There is something... defeatist in this approach; an acquiescence to the inability of society to insist that men change too; an acquiescence to perpetuation of male prerogative. Awareness of the presence of absence cannot be relegated to women and their daughters; men and their sons must quiet their voices and listen, too. (Robertson 14)

Conclusion

It seems women are only allowed to make gains in times of economic prosperity. During economic recessions and depressions, all equity-seeking groups are expected to take a back seat, giving way to issues and concerns that are important to "everyone."

> The recession of the 1990s has placed a number of pressures on public school systems and teachers. These pressures allow us to see more clearly that our school systems are political arenas in which struggles for power, status, personal values and survival are endemic. When unequal social relations between classes, races and sexes exist within those arenas, they are often organized in ways which rationalize and maintain inequalities. Hard economic times often exacerbate this situation. (Reynolds and Smaller 50–51)

"The fact that the economy is anaemic does not justify a listless response to discrimination" (Abella 17). As Rosalie Abella said ten years ago, we must not accept this position, however, if we expect to be able to change the status of women and girls, and by implication improve the conditions for everyone in our society.



Eileen Lennon, President of the Ontario Teachers' Federation. North Bay, Ontario, September 26, 1997. Photo: David Smiley

We have made improvements in seeking equity, but we still have far to go. When the economic situation is strained, we need to be ever more vigilant.

> Educators must become aware of how female students have accepted the inevitability of classroom inequity, and even how many have chosen the path of denial as more comfortable than the path of awareness. Teachers must address their own complicity if they have chosen the same solution. (Robertson 13)

Since the late 1980s, Canadians have been told that we must be concerned with government deficits and debt. We are told that we cannot afford the public services that we have become accustomed to. In spite of strong evidence to the contrary, social programs are blamed for the current economic situation. However, it remains that the majority of these programs must somehow still be provided. What is at issue is how they will be paid for and what value is placed on them.

> Social security reform is ultimately about national values and the prospects for nationhood. How we support and care for each other reflects the priority we place on national values such as social cohesion, inclusion, equity, and equal life chances for all children. A tradition of shared responsibility since World War II has shaped the meaning of nationhood in Canada and has nurtured a sense of who we are. At stake in the current reform of Canada's social security system is nothing less than the future of our country and how we define ourselves as a nation. (Campaign 2000 5)

As we have seen, education reform is following the same path. Some would claim that we have abandoned the pursuit of equity in education in Canada because we are influenced by the choice movement in the United States, because our administrators are influenced by the movement towards site-based management in Great Britain, because somehow globalization has taken over our ability to influence our own destiny. However, we must recognize that Canada has a history of its own. We cannot blame someone else for the direction we are going.

We went in the direction of a more equitable welfare state in the past, and we can pick up the pieces and go in that direction again. Measures such as employment equity can set the stage for a more progressive atmosphere within education. Resisting the forces that cut back on education funding in the name of deficit reduction and good government management can help to produce an education system that is not based on conflict, on constantly fighting for funding from anywhere in order to produce some sem-

blance of a good education, on competition for scarce resources. Truly committing ourselves to the needs of our children, all of our children, can produce the results that we know are possible. Such a commitment would ensure that all children are given a fair chance at being productive, emotionally and physically healthy, and equal participants in our society. It would also be economically smart for our society.

Until such time as the political pendulum swings back towards a more egalitarian society, and such time as economic prosperity is allowed to be shared by all citizens, it is incumbent upon all of us as teachers and parents, as activists for children's and women's rights to ensure that equity stays on our agenda. We can and must find ways of promoting these goals.

As teachers, as parents, as activists, as citizens, we must transform how we think about such issues, how we act, and how we react to what we see. We can be creative in finding solutions to such situations. We must not accept the old stereotypes wherever we see them. We need to be ever vigilant in every aspect of our lives if we are to give anything more than lip service to the pursuit of equity for girls and women, for visible minorities, for Aboriginal people, for those with disabilities, for everyone seeking equity.

Postscript

As I am doing the final edit on this paper, originally written in 1996, the Ontario Conservative government passed Bill 160, the so-called Education Quality Improvement Act. This Act makes sweeping changes to the education system in Ontario, changes that will be almost exclusively controlled by the cabinet. It is very clear that these changes will not improve the quality of education in Ontario. Bill 160 will:

•Remove the ability of teachers, parents, and local school boards to determine the best way to provide education in their local communities.

•Pave the way to remove billions of dollars from education. The cabinet will have the authority to set the local property tax rate for education, with no debate.

•Severely limit democracy by centralizing all control over education into the hands of a few MPPs in cabinet. The Minister of Education and Training will be given the authority to "fire" local school trustees who vote contrary to an order, direction, or decision of the Minister.

•Reduce the time for teachers to prepare and plan programs to meet the wide range of students' needs, limiting their ability to respond to an ever-changing world.

•Remove principals and vice-principals from the teachers' federations. The government has stated that Bill 160 is necessary to provide for a smooth transition to the new larger school boards. However, this amendment to Bill 160 will destabilize the education system, causing unnecessary stress on the school teams during this transition period.

•Not improve class sizes in Ontario's schools. Specifying the average class size for a board will not lower the classes of 35 and 40 that we know exist all too often. The government maintains that it can and will remove an additional $500 to $700 million from the education budget, a move we know can only increase class sizes.

•Increase the authority of school councils. This will pave the way for charter schools and site-based management, weakening our education system by creating a two-tiered education system.

•Extend the definition of occasional teachers to allow for a teacher to be replaced for up to two years before a permanent replacement is hired.

In spite of a two-week walkout by teachers, a bold move by a usually conservative group of people, and in spite of overwhelming public opposition, the government has determined that it will push ahead with its regressive agenda. This will set back our pursuit of equity even further.

The positive note to this is that everyone has been discussing education in Ontario. More is understood about the government's true agenda and more is understood about the education system. My hope is that this interest and attention does not wane. A more aware population will hopefully mean that positive changes that will benefit girls and women can take place in the not too distant future.

Patricia McAdie is a researcher for the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario (FWTAO). She is working diligently to raise her son to be a sensitive, caring person, one who will help to advance the pursuit of equity for all.

[1]For a fuller discussion of the development of the welfare state in Canada, see for example, Barlow and Campbell.
[2]For a fuller discussion of the development of this monetarist policy, see McQuaig.
[3]All salary figures are in 1994 constant dollars.
[4]The education funding formula in Ontario is about to change. However, we have no reason to believe that this relationship will change.
[5]For a fuller discussion of choice issues, refer to Barlow and Robertson and CTF 1997.

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