

Cadets, Curfews, and Compulsory Schooling: Mobilizing Anglophone Children in WW II Montreal

TAMARA MYERS
MARY ANNE POUTANEN*

The early 1940s constituted an important moment for youth in Quebec as social policy brought childhood and adolescence into sharper focus and the regulation of young people's behaviour expanded in the name of the wartime emergency. Measures for the mobilization and discipline of children were fuelled by images of absent fathers, working mothers, and latch-key children, combined with the dramatically rising juvenile delinquency rate. Legislation mandating compulsory schooling and a curfew for juveniles permitted the state and its agencies to train and constrain children and youth at a moment when parental guidance and surveillance were ostensibly at their lowest point. Protestant schools directed coercive strategies and protective measures at school-age children in an exaggerated effort to create good children and patriotic citizens.

Le début des années 1940 a été un moment charnière de la jeunesse du Québec, car la politique sociale fit alors une plus grande place à l'enfance et à l'adolescence et la réglementation du comportement juvénile fut élargie au nom de l'urgence de guerre. Les mesures visant à mobiliser et à discipliner les enfants s'alimentaient aux images de pères absents, de mères ouvrières et d'enfants à la clé combinées à une hausse spectaculaire du taux de délinquance juvénile. Les lois décrétant la fréquentation scolaire obligatoire et un couvre-feu pour les enfants permirent à l'État et à ses organismes de former les enfants et les jeunes et de les assujettir à sa volonté à un moment où l'encadrement et la surveillance des parents atteignirent ostensiblement un creux. Les écoles protestantes adoptèrent des stratégies de coercition et des mesures de protection destinées aux enfants d'âge scolaire dans un effort exagéré pour élever de bons enfants et cultiver le patriotisme.

* Tamara Myers is a member of the Department of History at the University of Winnipeg. Mary Anne Poutanen is adjunct professor in the Department of History at Concordia University. This study is made possible by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the FQRSC, and the Foundation for the Advancement of Protestant Education in Canada. The authors thank Andrée Lévesque, Roderick MacLeod, and the anonymous readers for their astute comments.

IN SEPTEMBER 1942 the Protestant school board authorities in Montreal concluded that they had a very serious problem.¹ The war was not going well, and the federal government's appeal to teachers to participate in the war effort had resulted in a shortage of teachers.² As some men and women signed up for military duty, other school personnel found new jobs in war industries. Consequently, schools were left with few male and many inexperienced teachers, a situation that, according to the board, compromised the school's efficacy as disciplinarian and emphasized the lack of masculine role models. A corresponding decline in parental control over school-age children had resulted from pressures on Montreal women to respond to the urgent appeals of government and industry for workers. Notwithstanding public and private initiatives in the field of child care, the multiple roles accorded women as workers, mothers, and wives during World War II were ambiguous and caused consternation among many elements of society.³ Canada's journalists, for example, debated women's ability to be "appropriate" disciplinarians. They suggested that women had difficulty reining in their high-spirited sons and daughters on their own, given that fathers were away and that mothers worked outside the home. Not only had women "deserted" the home, but children and adolescents also were eschewing the daily grind of school for work and social opportunities cultivated by the wartime context. The school board saw its neglected youthful charges as restless, tempted by rising wages, by employment possibilities, and by deleterious urban amusements. All of these factors coalesced to leave an impression that Montreal had a serious "youth problem"⁴ — one that the school board would have to solve.

In Quebec, the early 1940s was an important moment for youth as social policy brought childhood and adolescence into sharper focus and the regulation of youth behaviour expanded in the name of the wartime emergency. Legislation such as the implementation of compulsory schooling and a juvenile curfew permitted the state and its agencies to train and constrain children and youth at a moment when parental guidance and surveillance were ostensibly at their lowest point. To tackle the perceived youth problem, the state and

1 Officially called the Protestant Board of School Commissioners.

2 Between 1939 and 1945, they joined the nearly million Canadian men who would enlist in the armed forces, the majority of whom served overseas. In late 1943 the National Selective Service organized a committee to address the place of teachers in the war, and educators mounted a campaign to have teaching recognized as an important contribution to the war effort. See Dr. W. P. Percival, "How the War is Affecting the Schools", *Municipal Review of Canada* (May 1944), p. 6.

3 Two surveys on recruitment of women by the armed forces carried out by the Directorate of Army Recruiting revealed that Canadians overall ranked maintaining home life as the most important role of women during the war; work in war industry ranked second. A younger cohort classified waged labour in war production as more important than maintaining home life. See Ruth Pierson, "Wartime Jitters over Femininity", in J. L. Granatstein and Peter Neary, eds., *The Good Fight: Canadians and World War II* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1995), pp. 145–146.

4 English Montreal School Board Archives [hereafter EMSBA], S-0136, *Minute Book of Protestant Board of School Commissioners*, vol. 13 (September 23, 1942 – October 23, 1945), September 23, 1942.

schools developed what were called “protective measures” directed at adolescents that were in effect coercive strategies to control young people. Images of absent fathers, working mothers, and latch-key children combined with dramatically rising juvenile delinquency rates to fuel the mobilization and discipline of these children.

Juvenile justice authorities and school boards, acting as parents-at-large, stepped in quickly to regulate, guide, and socialize children and adolescents. In their role in supervising and disciplining students, schools, along with private agencies, created programmes to identify and address pre-delinquency. As part of the campaign to prevent delinquency, schools mobilized children and youth. We argue that this in turn fostered an exaggerated effort to create good children and patriotic citizens. Following the federal government’s initiatives, schools incited students to collect scrap materials, buy and sell victory bonds and war savings stamps, enrol in para-military training, grow Victory gardens, and sacrifice for “total war”. The mobilization of youth was particularly important to the Anglo-Protestant community in Montreal, given the context of Quebec’s (French Canada’s) ambivalence about the war. While French Canadians represented nearly a third (30 per cent) of Canada’s population, they made up only a fifth (19 per cent) of the armed forces.⁵ The prominent pro-British and imperialist community countered that ambivalence with a heightened sense of patriotic duty and promotion of the war. Ethnic minorities attending Protestant schools, such as Jewish children, embraced British symbols of empire and seemed enthusiastically engaged in salvage campaigns and fund-raising both at school and in the larger community to demonstrate their patriotism to the British Empire and to the defeat of Nazi Germany. By focusing on the success of the war effort on the home front, these Montrealers attempted to instil in youth a deep patriotism and a reverence for authority and discipline.

In spite of the attention given to delinquency panics during World War II, surprisingly few Canadian scholars have studied the place of children during this world conflict. In wartime, children and youth became both political causes and vectors of an affliction borne of the anxieties related to the violence and dislocation of war. Young people were both the problem and the solution. Jeffrey Keshen, in his book *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada’s Second World War*, argues that children occupied positions that were both praised and scorned in Canadian society.⁶ Guest children were seen as models of courage, discipline, and patriotic commitment; Canadian children, meanwhile, were responsible for an escalating delinquency problem. Other studies emphasize the idea of children’s willing engagement in “the good war”, often

5 Paul-André Linteau, René Durocher, Jean-Claude Robert, and François Ricard, *Quebec Since 1930* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1991), p. 104.

6 Jeffrey A. Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada’s Second World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004).

overlooking the process of how devotion to the war effort was normalized, the coercive nature of this mobilization, and its relationship to a youth panic.⁷ In Quebec, historians' seeming ambivalence about World War II, given French Canada's opposition to conscription and its place in Quebec history, has meant that few studies explore contributions to the war effort and none examine home-front children.⁸ By contrast, there is a much richer literature on the military and patriotic activities among children in wartime Ontario.⁹

This study weds two separate research projects that each address the history of children and youth in Montreal: one pertaining to the history of Quebec juvenile justice (and the regulation of youth) and the other to the history of Protestant schooling in Quebec.¹⁰ Both are central to the discussion about the mobilization and disciplining of children at school in Montreal during World War II. Many primary source documents speak to the problem of delinquency during the Second World War and its solutions. The Quebec media produced volumes on home-front conditions, and a myriad of child welfare specialists (including juvenile justice and school authorities, as well as lay and religious observers) were sought out for their opinions on delinquency. To understand the role of educational authorities in promoting the mobilization of children, we consulted minutes, annual reports, and correspondence of Montreal-island school boards. These are supplemented with

7 Christine Hamelin, "A Sense of Purpose: Ottawa Students and the Second World War", *Canadian Military History*, vol. 6, no. 1 (Spring 1997), pp. 34–41; Charles M. Johnston, "The Children's War: The Mobilization of Ontario Youth during the Second World War", in Roger Hall, William Westfall, and Laurel Sefton MacDowell, eds., *Patterns of the Past: Interpreting Ontario's History* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1988); Karen Anderson, "The Family in Wartime", in her book *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women during World War II* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1981); Robert William Kirk, "Getting in the Scrap: The Mobilization of American Children in World War II", *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 29, no. 1 (1995), pp. 223–233; John W. Jeffries, "Homefront Children: History and Historiography", *Reviews in American History*, vol. 24, no. 1 (1996), pp. 144–149.

8 For more on this topic, see Serge Bernier, "French Canadians in the Canadian Armed Forces in 1944", in Michael D. Behiels, ed., *Quebec since 1800: Selected Readings* (Toronto: Irwin Publishers, 2002), pp. 532–538; Sébastien Vincent, *Laissés dans l'ombre : les Québécois engagés volontaires de 39–45* (Montreal: VLB Éditeur, 2004), pp. 21–31. Dominique Marshall is an exception. In her book, *Aux origines sociales de l'État-providence* (Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1998), she examines the important children's rights arguments of Adélard Godbout's reformist government in implementing compulsory schooling (see chap. 1).

9 Gary J. Burke, "Good for the Boy and the Nation: Military Drill and the Cadet Movement in Ontario Public Schools, 1865–1911" (PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 1996); Mark Moss, *Manliness and Militarism: Educating Young Boys in Ontario for War* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2001). On World War II, see Johnston, "The Children's War"; Norah Lewis, "'Isn't this a terrible war?' The Attitudes of Children in Two World Wars", *HSE/RHE*, vol. 7, no. 2 (1995), pp. 193–215; Jeffrey A. Keshen, "One Family's War: World War Two as Seen Through the Craig Family Correspondence", *Canadian Military History*, vol. 7, no. 3 (Summer 1998), pp. 61–76.

10 Tamara Myers's research focuses on female delinquency and the juvenile justice movement in Quebec. Mary Anne Poutanen has co-authored a recently published monograph on the history of Protestant education in Quebec.

newspapers and institutional records (such as those of local home and school associations and the Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations, and annual reports of Neighbourhood House). While the focus here is on the anglophone children of Montreal, French- and English-speaking elites shared many concerns and were involved in extensive public discussions of the issues; for this reason, we have examined relevant French-language sources.

Undisciplined Children

The Second World War put delinquency and youth on the front pages of newspapers across the country. In Quebec, a series of policy changes directed at protecting children ironically circumscribed young people's freedoms. It was an era in which children and youth gained an unprecedented political presence, for better or worse. Several measures, such as the implementation in Montreal of a nighttime juvenile curfew in 1942 and compulsory schooling throughout the province in 1943, were aimed at children under 14 and had the effect of extending childhood. With respect to delinquency, the change in age of the category "juvenile delinquent" in 1942 from under 16 to under 18 had significant ramifications for the juvenile court and for those aged 16 and 17.

Children and youth were critical in wartime both symbolically and practically. Their value increased as they emerged as a needed labour source and in recognition that their future roles in reproduction were linked to successful reconstruction after the war. "[O]ur children are ... tomorrow's nation, of which we speak with special hope and expectancy during time of war," wrote John McLeish, principal of Valleyfield Protestant School, in 1942.¹¹ In Quebec, youth were also upheld as the key to the survival of the French-Canadian nation; in 1945 Premier Maurice Duplessis proposed Canada's first provincial ministry of youth, arguing, "[T]here is no possible survival for French-speaking Canada without assuring the future of our youth."¹² As barometers of the health and stability of society as a whole, children and youth became objects of scrutiny during the war. It is not surprising, then, that during the early 1940s "bad" or neglected children captured the imagination of politicians, policy makers, schools, parents, and the media.

According to the press, uncontrollable youth was a regrettable feature of the home-front experience. By 1941 Canadians had learned that Britain was besieged not only by German bombs but by juvenile crime.¹³ Discussions in the media pointed to youth's anti-social behaviour as allegedly caused by the wartime environment of blackouts, absent parents, and ever-present death and

11 John McLeish, "Youth Problems in Wartime", *Municipal Review of Canada* (July/August 1942), p. 7.

12 "Ministry of Youth Plan is Announced", *Montreal Gazette*, August 27, 1945, p. 20. On the rising political presence of youth in Quebec, see Louise Bienvenue, *Quand la jeunesse entre la scène : l'Action catholique avant la Révolution tranquille* (Montreal: Boréal, 2003), chap. 3.

13 Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, p. 204.

Table 1 Male and Female Juvenile Arrest Rates in Quebec, 1930–1946

Year	Major offences	Minor offences
1930	1,033 (40 or 3.9% girls)	548 (114 or 20.8% girls)
1931	1,260 (82 or 6.5% girls)	563 (128 or 22.7% girls)
1932	1,293 (86 or 6.7% girls)	680 (145 or 21.3% girls)
1933	1,426 (105 or 7.4% girls)	844 (188 or 22.3% girls)
1934	1,444 (78 or 5.4% girls)	1,089 (221 or 20.3% girls)
1935	1,633 (74 or 4.5% girls)	851 (177 or 20.8% girls)
1936	1,324 (46 or 3.5% girls)	857 (224 or 26.1% girls)
1937	1,392 (42 or 3.0% girls)	975 (292 or 30.0% girls)
1938	1,357 (38 or 2.8% girls)	958 (297 or 31.0% girls)
1939	1,245 (30 or 2.4% girls)	1,331 (380 or 28.5% girls)
1940	1,461 (49 or 3.4% girls)	1,605 (456 or 28.0% girls)
1941	1,637 (65 or 4.0% girls)	2,330 (511 or 22.0% girls)
1942	1,617 (54 or 3.3% girls)	2,427 (467 or 19.0% girls)
1943	1,455 (69 or 4.7% girls)	1,741 (406 or 23.0% girls)
1944	1,212 (37 or 3.0% girls)	1,047 (302 or 29.0% girls)
1945	1,239 (34 or 2.7% girls)	1,148 (368 or 32.0% girls)
1946	1,122 (49 or 4.4% girls)	1,033 (341 or 33.0% girls)

Source: *Quebec Annuaire Statistique/Statistical Year Book*, 1946, p. 245.

destruction. By 1942 vulnerable and delinquent children had also made headline news in Canada. The Montreal press weighed in cautiously at first, labeling the problem “unrest” among the teenage population in 1941. Unrest, though, evolved into a “youth problem” in 1942, and by 1944 newspapers reported that Montreal was beset with a full-blown wave of juvenile crime.¹⁴ At the conclusion of the war, *La Presse* quoted an Ottawa crown attorney, declaring that “la criminalité chez les jeunes est devenue un terrible fléau de nos jours”.¹⁵ It was not difficult to find proof that youth were out of control. Nationwide, the number of juvenile delinquents, according to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, rose from under 10,000 to almost 14,000 in 1942. In Montreal the number of children appearing before the juvenile court judge increased by 20 per cent between 1940 and 1942 (from 2,979 to 3,680).¹⁶

Commentators noted that the numbers were extraordinary in Montreal. According to one juvenile court lawyer, juvenile delinquency “a augmenté de façon énorme à Montréal depuis la guerre”. The numbers, while alarming, were not the entire story: youth had gone wild. He continued:

[L]e vol est en première ligne de compte; l’abandon de l’école par besoin de plaisir ou par négligence par des parents augmente de façon alarmante; les gros

¹⁴ *Montreal Gazette*, January 22, 1941; June 15, 1942; March 1, 1944.

¹⁵ *La Presse*, October 19, 1945, p. 5.

¹⁶ *Montreal Gazette*, March 11, 1944, p. 6.

salaires (par exemple \$31.00 par semaine pour un enfant de 12 ans), le besoin du plaisir, l'exploitation éhontée du petit garçon ou de la jeune fille pour satisfaire des besoins passionnels : voilà autant de causes de délinquance, et voilà autant de délits que favorisent les conditions actuelles de la guerre et du travail de guerre.¹⁷

Jobs with better salaries for both adolescent boys and girls drew them into a world of independence that sat precariously close to delinquency and immorality. Youth responsible for the mounting juvenile delinquency rate continued to commit the same offences they always had: petty theft, truancy, and loitering in the case of boys, and immoral conduct and desertion in the case of girls.¹⁸ Though these offences were not new, wartime conditions created an anxiety about the future. Idleness in boys meant a dissipated adulthood; immorality in girls called into question their future role as mothers of the next generation. Yet in a time of war ordinary sources of restraint, socialization, and discipline were weakened.

Most would agree that the war had a dramatic influence on the number of youth involved in delinquent behaviour. Although the number of delinquents subsequently dropped from its wartime zenith in 1942, the escalation of the early 1940s galvanized the adult world into action, prompting studies of juvenile delinquents and perpetuating the impression that, as long as war continued, juvenile delinquency would persist, threatening the war effort on the home front and endangering the future. President of the Canadian Teachers' Federation Beryl Truax wrote: "We as teachers and citizens are greatly alarmed at the increase of juvenile delinquency."¹⁹ It was no accident that in 1944 Montreal hosted a Delinquency Prevention Week, a six-day conference organized by the Junior League of Montreal, la Ligue de la jeunesse féminine, and the Jewish Junior Welfare League that brought together secular and religious authorities to determine how to "build" good citizens in the context of wartime. This was followed a year later by a proposal for a provincial youth ministry, which was finally implemented in 1949.²⁰

During the war, focus turned to identifying the underlying cause of the delinquency crisis. The wartime milieu provided multiple causal factors. While "broken home" theories abounded prior to the war, now the blame was laid on war-weary families. Families, it appeared, were torn apart by

17 Valère Massicotte, *La délinquance juvénile et la guerre* (Montreal: Oeuvre des Tracts, April 1944), p. 10.

18 See Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, p. 213; D. Owen Carrigan, *Juvenile Delinquency in Canada: A History* (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 1998), pp. 110–111.

19 Beryl Truax, "Our Young Canadians", *Municipal Review of Canada* (February 1944), p. 17. Truax was appointed in 1943 to an advisory committee under the National Selective Service Civilian Regulations on the role of school teachers during the war. In the 1945 federal election, she ran (and was defeated) as a Labour Progressive Party candidate in the riding of Mount Royal (*Labour Gazette*, December 1943, pp. 1613–1617).

20 Bienvenue, *Quand la jeunesse entre la scène*, pp. 148–149.

war, making them neglectful; furthermore, the demands of war crippled proper parenting. This construction of reality permitted the rise of a contradictory youth problem: neglected children were believed victimized by the war, yet they capitalized on their newfound freedom, becoming delinquents.

The situation in Montreal was exacerbated by its role in the war. The city quickly became a national hub for recruited men and the most important and largest industrial war producer. Montrealers, in unprecedented numbers, responded to the urgent appeals of government and industry for workers and armed forces personnel. The loss of men to the war, of women to war industry, and of youth to the streets provoked an intense reaction. Latch-key children who turned delinquent were the result of the reorganization of the family, common to the home front, as outlined in *La Presse* in 1944: "Le père est en Italie. Le frère aîné dans la marine. La mère travaille toute la journée dans une usine de guerre."²¹ During the war, parents typically were condemned for deserting their children and causing a rise in delinquency rates. Beryl Truax joined a chorus of voices declaring the juvenile delinquency problem "evidence of the breakdown in social controls" and pointing to the oft-repeated culprits: fathers in service and mothers at work.²² Jewish child welfare workers similarly argued, "War-time conditions accentuate and increase the need to care for the youngsters who are thrown on their own by neglectful or absent parents."²³ Familial difficulties were believed exacerbated by the expansive opportunities for employment in the city; as people moved into Montreal, their arrival laid bare the critical shortage of housing. Observers pointed to the overcrowded and deteriorating living conditions that fuelled familial problems. Thus neglectful parents and a deleterious housing situation meant a lack of social control on the city's children, which could only lead to a future generation of criminal adults.

While both parents could be identified as causing delinquency in their children, in certain contexts the primary cause was seen to be fathers, whereas in others mothers were singled out. In Vichy France, for example, pervasive anxiety over the surrender and the large number of French men taken into German POW camps produced a discourse in which absent fathers caused youth crime rates to soar.²⁴ In Canada, mothers attracted much of the blame. Ruth Pierson and others have suggested that the delinquency panic was imbued with negative constructions of wartime mothering.²⁵ In Montreal, the growing demand

21 *La Presse*, March 11, 1944, p. 6.

22 *Ibid.* See also McLeish, "Youth Problems in Wartime", p. 7.

23 Neighbourhood House, Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, *Annual Report*, 1941.

24 Sarah Fishman, "Absent Fathers and Family Breakdown: Delinquency in Vichy France", in Pamela Cox and Heather Shore, eds., *Becoming Delinquent: British and European Youth, 1650–1950* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2002), p. 147.

25 See Ruth Roach Pierson, "*They're still women after all*": *The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1986); Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble with Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. 41.

for and availability of employment outside the home portended badly for the children of wartime. In 1942 the Montreal Society for the Protection of Women and Children warned that the war had led to an increase in “grievously neglected” children and that the conduct of their mothers had amounted to criminal indifference to children’s physical and mental suffering. President Havelock Wheatley argued, in the context of a lack of compulsory school attendance, “[I]t is a fallacy to assume that children of 6 to 14 years can safely be left to their own device ... we have often wondered whether it would not be a good policy to ‘freeze’ mothers of families to the work of looking after them in their own homes, particularly where the father is unable to assume that task because of absence or other incapacity....”²⁶ Wheatley was not alone in surmising that the way to improve children’s behaviour was to discipline the mother. As women left their homes and took up factory and other paid work to support their families, they were accused of failing to uphold their “sacred duties”. Priest Valère Massicotte, in *La délinquance juvénile et la guerre*, declared that women had abdicated their role as “gardienne du foyer et d’éducatrice” and that this neglect had led him to support the interdiction that mothers with children under 16 not work.²⁷ Quebec legislators, unions, and Catholic hierarchy mounted a chorus of opposition to married women’s work during the war.²⁸

Women turned for assistance to their parents and other family members, in addition to friends and neighbours, to organizations such as the Montreal Soldiers’ Wives League, to social agencies such as the Local Council of Women and the Baron de Hirsch Institute, and to government. For example, Neighbourhood House, a Jewish philanthropic endeavour located in the midst of Montreal’s immigrant area, required more substantial nursery facilities by 1941 because of “the many children left with us daily by the increased number of working mothers”.²⁹ Both the federal and provincial governments accommodated mothers’ childcare needs by providing daycare and after-school programmes while they were at work, and industry established “housewife shifts”, which allowed women to work between 6:00 and 11:00 in the evening. Women also solved childcare problems by recruiting family members to help or by arranging babysitting services for a group of children.³⁰ Yet the need to expand women’s traditional roles caused palpable waves of anxiety. For example, Canada’s journalists debated the potential erosion of women’s femininity from factory work and their ability to be adequate disciplinarians to their children.

26 *Montreal Gazette*, March 28, 1942.

27 Massicotte, *La délinquance juvénile et la guerre*, p. 13.

28 Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, *The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec* (Toronto: Gage Publishing, 1982), pp. 223–224.

29 Neighbourhood House, *Annual Report*, 1941.

30 Jeffrey Keshen, “Revisiting Canada’s Civilian Women During World War II”, *Histoire sociale/Social History*, vol. 30, no. 60 (November 1997), pp. 250–251.

As was often the case, women, being the only adults at home, were responsible for the family finances, parenting, and maintaining the home front. These obligations engendered, as Magda Fahrni argues, both independence and self-sufficiency, but also loneliness and chronic anxiety about the safety of loved ones and about marital fidelity.³¹ The clergy complained that work, even in the name of patriotism, was destructive of the French-Canadian family because it led women to temptation.³² Wheatley agreed that, in the absence of their husbands, women sought companionship beyond the home and diversion in movies and dance halls.³³ Explaining the apparent rise in juvenile delinquency in Montreal during the war, priest Valère Massicotte pointed to the absent mother who worked by day and sought to assuage her loneliness for her soldier-husband at night in cinemas and similar amusements.

Like their mothers, youth also left home, took up jobs sometimes far away, and generally appeared to be on the move. With the dramatically increasing number of jobs available, youth enthusiastically left school and entered the labour force. Adolescents found increasing opportunity for work and freedom to pursue pleasure and adventure. The tremendous mobility of youth was cast as problematic, evidence of a “nervous excitement” that was engendered by the lack of social control. The labour market rally in the early 1940s also caused other “problems”, especially among under-supervised young women who moved swiftly to factories, including munitions, and into restaurant and hotel work. Montreal continued to attract young women from rural Quebec who sought wages unavailable in their home towns. These developments alarmed onlookers. The Jeunesse ouvrière catholique, a youth group formed in the 1930s, for example, called for protection of these young “girls”. At first the group demanded that girls in the countryside stay home; then it argued that domestic service should evolve into a better place for girls, with improved working conditions and training; finally, it maintained that girls should delay moving into this work until they reached the age of 16. The JOC was one of many voices that raised the question of how to protect adolescent girls during the wartime crisis.³⁴ The buoyant wartime economy provided youth with relatively high wages but without moral overseers, and girls seemed to lack discretion in spending both money and leisure time. Observers noted that the wartime environment on the one hand provided young people with jobs, liberty, and excitement, and on the other inundated them with daily news of death and destruction, instilling in children and youth a “sense of unrest and unsettlement”.³⁵

31 Magda Fahrni, “The Romance of Reunion: Montreal War Veterans Return to Family Life, 1944–1949”, *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, no. 9 (1998), p. 190.

32 Trofimenkoff, *The Dream of Nation*, pp. 256–257.

33 *Montreal Gazette*, March 28, 1942.

34 Marie Hamel, “La protection de la jeune fille”, *Canadian Welfare*, vol. 17, no. 6 (November 1941), pp. 22–24.

35 McLeish, “Youth Problems in Wartime”, p. 7.

A moral panic followed the absent father, the working mother, the latch-key child, and the working teen. Anecdotal evidence seemed to prove that these social developments caused by war amounted to a surge in delinquency or potential delinquency. Anxieties about abandonment turning children into delinquents was also reflected in popular culture during the war. In 1944 Montrealers heralded a Hollywood movie that mirrored this concern. *La Presse* wrote, “Problème social exposé à l’écran” in advertising the film *Where Are Your Children?*, which opened at the Snowden theatre in March 1944, coinciding with the city’s Delinquency Prevention Week. The advertisements spoke directly to a current of anxiety in the community concerning child neglect: “Where are your children TONIGHT.”³⁶ The film centred on a 17-year-old orphan girl, who was sent to live with her brother and sister-in-law, two weary defence-plant workers. Her role in this family includes housekeeping “for her sister-in-law” in the daytime; she also holds a job working evenings at a restaurant. There she meets a boy, also the product of a neglectful mother who is too busy with her volunteer work to pay any attention to him. The two teens venture out to a nightclub, thus beginning a chain of events leading to a dramatic conclusion. Ultimately a midnight joy-ride develops into a tragic scene involving a murder, and the girl, though not directly responsible for the murder, is taken to juvenile court. The film’s emphasis on neglected youth as both a casualty of war and a pernicious social force rang true for Montrealers. Judges Nicholson and Robillard of Montreal’s juvenile court thought the film showed “just what is going on in our courts everyday”, and it confirmed the notion that delinquency and juvenile crime most often occurred at night.³⁷ Similarly, a juvenile court committee member argued that juvenile delinquency rose 60 per cent as night fell. The judges described the slippery slope of those young people who kept late hours beyond the foyer where they met bad “older” friends, learned to steal, and accepted a life of vice.³⁸ They, too, argued that lapsed care was the problem, declaring that “parental neglect was the cause of such bad youth behaviour”. The clerk of the court stated that 90 per cent of “our cases are the fault of the delinquent parents”.³⁹

While delinquency experts in Montreal claimed that “juvenile delinquency is a symptom of adult delinquency”,⁴⁰ they called for greater protection of children — especially freedom from exploitation at the hands of parents and employers. As well, they confirmed certain rights for the family, including the right of the father to decent earnings and of the family to “such conditions as would make it unnecessary for mothers to engage in industry to the detriment of their children”. Acknowledging the desperate conditions

36 *Montreal Gazette*, March 9, 1944, p. 3.

37 *Ibid.*

38 R. P. Archambault, *Le Couvre-Feu* (Montreal: L’Oeuvre des Tracts, April 1942), pp. 4–5.

39 *Montreal Gazette*, March 9, 1944, p. 3.

40 *Montreal Gazette*, March 11, 1944, p. 13.

of wartime physical spaces, they argued for the right of the family to adequate housing and the right of parents as well as children to recreational facilities.⁴¹ John Dalton of the juvenile court committee argued that the child had a fundamental right to a complete “intellectual, physical, moral and religious” upbringing and maintained the necessity of the state’s interventionist role in cases where parents were incapable, negligent, or criminal.⁴² This emergent paradigm of rights for children was accompanied by a contradictory assault on the freedoms of individual youth through an expanded programme to regulate their behaviour.

Disciplining Children: Delinquency Intervention

Although bad parenting — whether justified or not by fathers’ and mothers’ contributions to the war effort — was seen as the major cause in the rise of juvenile delinquency, the perceived remedy affected the lives of children. The wartime environment created a context that made greater intrusions into children’s and their families’ lives not only permissible but desirable. Profound changes were made to the relationship between the Quebec state and youth during World War II: first, in 1942 the age stipulated for the category “juvenile delinquent” rose from under 16 to under 18; second, also in 1942, Montreal passed a curfew by-law curbing the nighttime activities of children under 14; third, in 1943 the province passed a compulsory education law, affecting children to age 14.

The close link between a youth going astray and an unindustrious, maladjusted adult was an argument for extending the age of juvenile delinquents from those under 16 to those under 18. Prior to 1942, youth who had reached the age of 16 and had committed a crime were treated as adults. Thus, according to observers, one of the first experiences of adulthood could be jail, where the child “learns to be a grownup criminal”. This argument dates from the nineteenth century and the origins of juvenile justice. The criminal justice system in effect set the juvenile delinquent upon a road to becoming a social menace, from which he or she might never return. Raising the age of delinquency to include those under 18 was cast as a solution to prevent children from growing up the wrong way, especially boys from becoming men too soon. This broadening of the definition of adolescent opened the door for thousands of 16- and 17-year-olds to be caught in the web of juvenile justice. During the war the juvenile morality squad, operating out of the Montreal Juvenile Delinquents’ Court, gained jurisdiction over adolescents for such nebulous crimes as incorrigibility and desertion.

One of the most popular weapons used against the wildly rising delinquency rate was the nocturnal juvenile curfew, implemented in many Canadian municipalities throughout the war and in Montreal in 1942.⁴³ Prior to

41 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

42 Archambault, *Le Couvre-Feu*, pp. 9–10.

43 Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, p. 207.

the war, Montreal councillors had been opposed to the curfew on the basis that it intruded on the privacy of the family. A campaign launched by the Comité des oeuvres catholiques de Montréal (representing the Société St-Vincent-de-Paul, the Association catholique de la jeunesse canadienne, and L'Action catholique) included petitioning city hall in 1937 for a municipal curfew, but to no avail. The delinquency panic of World War II and the discourse surrounding the troubled family led to the successful passage of the by-law in 1942. Curfew enthusiasts came from a variety of sources. In April 1941, for example, the St-Lambert school board decided to petition city hall for a curfew, so that lone children could be removed from city streets at night.⁴⁴ So enthusiastic were its supporters that the curfew was elevated beyond a law to an institution. It held out tremendous promise, as indicated by the triumvirate: it was referred to as a crime reducer, a child protector, and a home builder.

The curfew was introduced as a measure to protect childhood and reinforce the family. Whereas the war tore at the heart of family stability, the curfew was conceived of as a counterpoint — a “home builder”. The curfew law’s reputation evolved dramatically in the context of the war, for it could then be cast as a way for the state to come to the aid of needy families. As priest Archambault argued in his 1942 treatise on the curfew, “Mother is alone at home. She doesn’t have the needed authority to make children obey. The children go out and run [in the streets] at night despite her ... she is powerless, worried and sorry.”⁴⁵ Montreal’s mayor remarked that “times are difficult ... mothers are working in war factories, and more will follow, especially in working class areas, where children are without surveillance in the evenings”.⁴⁶ Judge Robillard argued that times had changed over the past 20 years and that parents generally did not take seriously their responsibilities to keep children off the streets at night.⁴⁷ Seeing the curfew as a child protector, its proponents argued that the home was the “natural habitat of the young child; without the curfew he misses family life that offers the child a sense of belonging and security”.⁴⁸

Children’s *sorties nocturnes* were identified with the “great evils of our time”.⁴⁹ Protecting the child from behaviour that might lead to criminality was critical. Judge Nicholson of the juvenile court stated that, beyond the crime that occurred at night, the cost to a child’s body was one that Montreal society could not afford. Sleep deprivation had long-term consequences for children’s physical and mental well-being and especially for their morality.

44 Riverside School Board Archives [hereafter RSBA], *Minutes of the School Commissioners of St-Lambert*, April 22, 1941.

45 Archambault, *Le Couvre-Feu*, p. 2.

46 *La Presse*, August 21, 1942, p. 12.

47 Archambault, *Le Couvre-Feu*, pp. 4–5; interview with Judge Robillard.

48 Archambault, *Le Couvre-Feu*, pp. 7–9; interview with John F. Dalton.

49 Archambault, *Le Couvre-Feu*, p. 1.

Athletic and intellectual ability were compromised, Nicholson argued, leading to “feelings of inferiority” and poor morale. In turn, these problems exacerbated delinquent acts such as the telling of lies, bullying, and rudeness. By staying out late, the child sacrificed development of such virtues as “calmness of thinking, sense of duty, and responsibility”. Each child lost to sleep deprivation, and the street “lower[ed] the quality of our culture”.⁵⁰

The argument that the curfew helped protect childhood was an attempt to relieve the curfew of its repressive and illiberal nature. Mayor Renault defensively argued, “[W]e don’t want to put in place a harassment mechanism but rather we want to protect young children from the dangers of the street.”⁵¹ Archambault stated simplistically that wartime was a moment of sacrifice; the curfew taught children that, when freedom was in danger, even they must “submit to a spirit of obedience and discipline.... They will only be better citizens, more devoted to their country, more disposed to serve and defend constituted authority.”⁵²

In September 1942 the municipal government passed By-law 1715.⁵³ The curfew stipulated that all children under 14 years of age, unless attending night courses, were forbidden to “circulate in the streets, lanes and public places” between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. Exceptions were made for children in the company of a parent. The by-law required that, with the first infraction, the adult responsible for the child be brought before the juvenile court; a repeat juvenile offender would be brought directly to the court. Besides the ignominy of being brought to court, the child was also subject to a fine or detention in the case that he or she was unable to pay the fine.

Following passage of the by-law, children were routinely rounded up after the curfew hour. From the records of the Montreal Juvenile Delinquents’ Court, it is evident that children aged 11, 12, and 13 were brought to juvenile court for being on the streets at night. Most pleaded guilty and were fined between 50 cents and \$1. Failure to pay the fine within one week resulted in incarceration in the detention home.⁵⁴ The court had used curfew law for decades to regulate specific youth who had been convicted of an offence under the *Juvenile Delinquents Act* (1908); these targeted curfews frequently required that the juvenile be at home after 6 p.m. While this might appear to be a harsh measure, the youth was spared reform school and permitted to return home. The immediate impact of the more generalized curfew was to make delinquent throngs of children whose only offence was not being at home in the evening.

50 J. G. Nicholson, “Curfew Law and Child Delinquency”, *Municipal Review of Canada* (September 1942), p. 7.

51 *La Presse*, August 21, 1942, p. 12.

52 Archambault, *Le Couvre-Feu*, pp. 2–3.

53 Adopted by the Executive Committee on August 18, 1942 and by the Council on September 2, 1942.

54 See, for example, the 11 children brought in by Sergeant Detective Schaffer on June 3 and 4, 1943 (Archives nationales du Québec à Montréal, Fonds Cour des jeunes délinquants, case 4239, June 4, 1943).

While curfew law took care of children's nighttime behaviour, another law addressed how they spent their days. The reformist provincial government of Adélard Godbout passed a third piece of legislation related to childhood and youth, which made schooling compulsory for children up to age 14 as of September 1943. The relative tardiness of such legislation (arriving 70 years after Ontario's) has led historians to several conclusions. Many stress the role of the Catholic Church in frustrating the state's incursion into its long-held jurisdiction over education, as well as considerable divisions within the labour movement that prevented the establishment of a cohesive and effective campaign for mandatory schooling. Thérèse Hamel argues that the primary cause was Quebec's dependence on child labour. The new law targeted children between 12 and 14, an age group most at risk for dropping out of school to take up waged labour or to help out at home. Hamel shows that by age 14 more than half of Quebec's youth were no longer attending school.⁵⁵ The majority of these boys worked in agriculture and the girls in domestic service. Children also served as an important source of non-remunerated labour in their families; girls were expected to take responsibility for domestic chores, and boys provided a critical labour force on family farms. Curiously, Hamel fails to consider the timing of the law, even though there had been numerous unsuccessful attempts to introduce compulsory schooling before 1943, and it had not been a major factor in the 1939 provincial election. She disregards the role that the war and subsequent youth panic played in the Liberal government's decision to re-introduce and legislate compulsory education and its success in doing so.

By contrast, Dominique Marshall argues that compulsory schooling increasingly became the solution to the alarmist coverage on wartime delinquency. The war context gave rise to a sensitivity to social problems that could be resolved by compulsory schooling, such as delinquency but also illiteracy, a problem revealed among recruits.⁵⁶ Mandatory schooling was intended to get children into school, out of the factories, and off the streets. Its purpose was not lost on Protestant school commissioners: "the chief effect of the Act will be to provide for more regular attendance by a relatively small group of children whose delinquency may be attributed to such causes as poverty and lack of parental control."⁵⁷ To ensure the effectiveness of this legislative and social change, B. H. Brown, well experienced in the art of child surveillance and supervision, was appointed Montreal's first truant officer for Protestant schools in July 1943 for the coming school year.⁵⁸

55 Thérèse Hamel, "Obligation scolaire et travail des enfants au Québec : 1900–1950", *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, vol. 38, no. 1 (Summer 1984), pp. 47–50, and "L'obligation scolaire au Québec : enjeu pour le mouvement syndical et agricole", *Labour/Le Travail*, no. 17 (Spring 1986), pp. 83–102.

56 Marshall, *Aux origines sociales de l'État-providence*, pp. 30–31.

57 EMSBA, Protestant Board of School Commissioners [hereafter PBSC], *PBSC Annual Report, 1942–43*, p. 8.

58 *Montreal Gazette*, July 17, 1943, p. 17.

The Second World War was an important moment for schools. Not only did compulsory schooling reinforce their position with respect to the state, but schools took up an important challenge to diminish delinquency and shape the future generation. Dr. W. P. Percival, director of Protestant education for the province, argued that “many pupils have deteriorated in discipline, manners and morals”.⁵⁹ Professor John Hughes of McGill University’s Department of Education told the press, “Montreal’s juvenile delinquency problem is a very anxious one for school authorities.”⁶⁰ These educators argued that during wartime the school was especially important, making up for homes that were necessarily deficient. Beryl Truax linked the youth problem to the demise of effective social controls; these included the home, the school, and the community. During the war there was an understanding that the home was sacrificed for the war effort, thus weighing more heavily on the school to “civilize the child”.⁶¹ The role of the school must necessarily expand, Percival suggested, to compel discipline and maintain public morale. By World War II, the idea of school as socializing agent was well embraced by professionals. Based on loose psychological theories about child development, this idea of “social education” focused on the importance of the teacher (from whom the student “acquired attitudes towards adults and discipline”⁶²) and of supervised play with peers. Recent developments in education theory meant that by the 1940s schools were moving beyond the three Rs to focus on “build[ing] bodies and enrich[ing] personalities”.⁶³ This entailed the school accepting responsibility for supervising play and leisure activities. The school occupied a “strategic position” in child development and discipline: “If schools fail to adapt their curricula to the needs of their pupils, if they fail to take cognizance of children as total personalities with feelings and interests and family situations out of which they come and to which they must return, then some children will rebel.”⁶⁴ Acknowledging the acute delinquency problem, the Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers organized a “Youth Problems Committee” in 1940 to help teachers and schools cope.⁶⁵

The schools’ task was not an easy one, for the war demanded more of educators at the same time as it absorbed staff and resources. Teachers, especially male teachers and principals, continued to take up what was considered more urgent work, despite the announcement of the National Selective Service that secondary school teachers “can best serve Canada by

59 Percival, “How the War is Affecting the Schools”, p. 6.

60 *Montreal Gazette*, March 9, 1944, p. 3.

61 Eric I. Smit (executive secretary, Children’s Service Association of Montreal), “Delinquency — Prevention or Cure?”, *Municipal Review of Canada* (May 1944), p. 14.

62 Truax, “Our Young Canadians”, p. 17.

63 McLeish, “Youth Problems in Wartime”, p. 7.

64 Smit, “Delinquency — Protection or Cure?”, p. 14.

65 See *Montreal Gazette*, January 3, 1942, p. 19; June 15, 1942, p. 3.

continuing in their teaching jobs” and a plea by Dr. Percival, director of Protestant education for the Province of Quebec, that “though the school cannot be considered as a war industry, it is certainly a powerful auxiliary”.⁶⁶ As well-trained teachers left their jobs to take up war work, many schools resorted to less than adequately prepared teachers. The effect of overcrowded classrooms and poorly trained teachers could be anti-social, maladjusted children. This problem would be managed from the top, with campaigns to involve children in war effort. School programmes also turned to the bodies of children, not just for purposes of discipline but with a view to eradicating the high level of physical weakness in the population revealed by the inspection of army recruits.

Mobilizing Children: The Making of Child Citizens

Quebec Protestant schools had prepared their pupils to support another British war. Exposed systematically to a Protestant view that emphasized loyalty to empire and nation,⁶⁷ students sang, read, drilled, and celebrated Empire Day,⁶⁸ all of which reinforced patriotic feelings toward England. Public schools across the country echoed similar allegiances, which had peaked, according to historian Norah Lewis, during World War I: “Textbooks, curricula, games and patriotic songs, flag-raising ceremonies, adventure stories, and books all sanctioned and lauded British imperialist values of loyalty, honesty, respect for authority, obedience, and support of Monarch, Empire, and Dominion.”⁶⁹ School commissioners also hung photographs of British

66 Percival, “How the War is Affecting the Schools”, p. 6.

67 English Canadians’ patriotic fervour for all things British had been advanced on one hand by the 1897 celebration of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee, the optimism of the new millennium, the British military victory during the Boer War, and Canada’s presence at the imperial peace conferences. It was, on the other hand, a reaction to massive immigration, industrialization, urbanization, and society’s increasing secularism, all of which seemed to threaten the status quo. Jingoism served as an appropriate antidote. So, too, did a Canadian narrative that promoted a single vision of the country’s imagined history that emphasized the nation’s ties to the British Empire. Symbolic tributes to a national history, in the form of commemorative monuments, included the tercentenary celebrations in Quebec City, fashioned to reinforce a national identity that was supposed to unite all Canadians. For more on this topic, see Daniel Francis, *National Dreams: Myth, Memory, and Canadian History* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1997); H. V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec’s Tercentenary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Colin M. Coates and Cecilia Morgan, *Heroines and History: Representations of Madeleine de Verchères and Laura Secord* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

68 Empire Day as a means to celebrate Canada’s membership in the British Empire was the brainchild of Mrs. Clementine Fessenden of Hamilton and the initiative of Ontario Education Minister George Ross. Held the school day prior to the celebration of Queen Victoria’s birthday, its purpose was to emphasize Britain’s past glories in addition to its great imperial future. Children welcomed the break from normal school activities. See Robert M. Stamp, “Empire Day in the Schools of Ontario: The Training of Young Imperialists”, *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 8, no. 3 (1973), p. 37. Protestant educationalists in Quebec, like provincial governments elsewhere, sanctioned this manufactured holiday.

69 Norah L. Lewis, ed., *“I want to join your club”: Letters from Rural Children, 1900–1920* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996), p. 7.

monarchs in classrooms, teachers taught history and geography with British and Canadian textbooks (American texts were rejected for their republican messages), and students read literature that offered a sanitized version of the British Empire's history. School boards named buildings after members of the royal family and governors-general. The pageantry of royal visits and a panoply of patriotic activities coalesced to instil all things British in their youthful charges. At assemblies, school authorities prominently displayed the Union Jack, students drilled, pledged allegiance to the monarch, and sang "God Save the King" as well as other related songs. In schools that accommodated large numbers of immigrant children, these patriotic representations and rituals played a critical role inculcating Anglo-Canadian traditions and a love for Britain in new Canadians.⁷⁰ Organizations such as the Boy Scouts promoted a specific male form of patriotism in Protestant schools, which David E. Shi refers to as traditional masculine values that were the "moral equivalent of war" during peace time.⁷¹ The Boy Scouts were an imperial symbol linked to Protestant notions of sacrifice and dedication.⁷² The scouting movement advanced citizenship and reinforced the social order by emphasizing masculine traits of virility, chivalry, self-discipline, and Christianity, as well as nature.

Protestant school boards across the island of Montreal had already gained considerable experience in mobilizing students for war work. During World War I, school commissioners had ensured that pupils were imbued with a strong sense of service and sacrifice. Working in tandem with organizations such as the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE),⁷³ the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the Red Cross, cadets, and Boy Scouts, they had fostered many of the activities associated with the war effort. A procession of charitable groups had organized fund-raising for a variety of patriotic causes such as the Patriotic Fund and the Red Cross and solicited donations from pupils for the relief of suffering children in Belgium. Government representatives had spoken in assembly halls on the

70 Lewis, " 'Isn't this a terrible war?' ", p. 198.

71 David E. Shi, "Ernest Thompson Seton and the Boy Scouts: A Moral Equivalent of War?", *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 84, no. 4 (Autumn 1985), p. 391.

72 Robert H. MacDonald, *Sons of the Empire: The Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement, 1890–1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), pp. 13, 186, 183.

73 While the IODE added a female voice to the imperial chorus in the new millennium, as Nancy Sheehan argues, its vision was "imperialist, racist, class-biased, and patriarchal", around which it developed an educational policy for the public schools of Canada that was critical of the nation's approach to education for citizenship, which, in the IODE's opinion, should include character formation. The IODE offered scholarships and prizes for essay contests that promoted the imperial link with Canada, donated library books on similar themes, provided a catalogue of gramophone records and sold gramophones to schools through its national education programme, participated in Empire Day celebrations, and established a "Patriotic Programme for Use in Schools the Last Day of the Month". See Nancy M. Sheehan, "Philosophy, Pedagogy, and Practice: The IODE and the Schools in Canada, 1900–1945", *HSE/RHE*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1990), pp. 307–315.

importance of avoiding waste, and students responded by collecting materials for injured soldiers and prisoners of war.

Although adult women had pushed gender boundaries during the First World War by engaging in “men’s” work, the mobilization of young people kept to a traditional gender role script. Girls performed their gender through “feminine arts” and boys through “manly” activities. Girls knitted woolen garments and accessories for soldiers and organized funding-raising events, reinforcing the idea that their future lives would be properly circumscribed by home and voluntary labour. Schools did not emphasize the changes in women’s work and their participation in the war effort, finding no reason to train the next generation of women capable of serving with the armed forces. Boys, meanwhile, joined the cadet corps, a programme seen by the federal government, according to Daniel Francis, as the means to train a “standing army in waiting”. They also travelled to the prairies during the summer as “soldiers of the soil” to help out on the nation’s farms. The tenets of manliness — duty to country, fitness, and virtue — were reiterated to serve imperial concerns, just as physical education was introduced into schools as a means to promote moral hygiene, self-control, military preparedness, and patriotism.⁷⁴ School authorities employed a rhetoric that emphasized love of country, the glory in fighting evil, and the necessity of making the supreme sacrifice. Protestant schools paid homage to the 60,000 Canadian soldiers who died during the Great War by erecting some sort of memorial to these fallen heroes. The events of the war were reconstructed, Jonathan Vance argues, “from a complex mixture of fact, wishful thinking, half-truth, and outright invention” to create a national memory that children learned at school.⁷⁵ This commemoration provided a compelling symbol of masculinity just as its memory was evoked in patriotic practices in the interwar period.

In the months leading up to World War II, Anglo-Protestant patriotism had been given a boost when King George VI and Queen Elizabeth visited Canada in the spring of 1939; they were the first reigning monarchs to do so. Urban and rural Protestant school boards planned and participated in the event so that as many pupils as possible might see the royal couple in person. In honour of the visit, the Protestant Board of School Commissioners apportioned \$1,000 from its budget for decorations, an enormous sum of money at the time. On May 18, 14,000 Protestant students crowded into McGill’s Molson Stadium to greet the royal motorcade.⁷⁶ The threat of impending war gave a certain impetus to the celebrations, in light of a reluctance in Catholic Quebec to fight another war for Britain. By 1939 not only had this issue

74 Sheehan, “Philosophy, Pedagogy, and Practice”, p. 312.

75 Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1996), p. 3.

76 William Weintraub, *City Unique: Montreal Days and Nights in the 1940s and 50s* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1996), p. 10.

divided Protestants and Catholics, but the possibility that the federal government would legislate conscription was central to the provincial campaign that elected Adélard Godbout premier of Quebec. Expressing enthusiasm for the king and queen, then, was a means for children and adolescents attending Protestant schools to assert their loyalty to Britain.

Protestant education officials believed that the European conflict provided an opportunity to highlight the tenets of democracy.⁷⁷ Their envisioned democracy did not preclude some school commissioners from acting on insidious xenophobic attitudes toward students attending their schools. Preoccupied with what it perceived as seditious leanings among its student body, the Outremont school board likely equated the Yiddish-speaking, working-class Jewish community from which many of its students came with communist sympathies.⁷⁸ To counter this real or imagined threat, the school board purchased more Union Jacks for classrooms as “a further means of inculcating patriotism”⁷⁹ and established a cadet programme to counter “subversive tendencies” among those attending the Strathcona Academy.⁸⁰

Nor did democracy always allow for freedom of expression; students who refused to participate in patriotic activities risked expulsion from school. When the superintendent of schools suspended a 10-year-old francophone pupil from Amherst School who refused to salute the flag, the school board supported the action by refusing to overturn his decision.⁸¹ In another case involving religious beliefs at odds with patriotic practices, the principal of Lorne School expelled two children, practising Jehovah’s Witnesses, “because they refused to salute the flag and sing the National Anthem, exercises required daily in all schools of the board”. Efforts by their mother and a family friend to explain why their religious doctrine did not permit the children’s participation in these exercises fell on deaf ears. The commissioners unanimously endorsed the principal’s actions.⁸² Not even an appeal by Judge J. G. Nicholson of the Montreal Juvenile Delinquents’ Court could dissuade the commissioners. Representing the Protestant commissioners, the superintendent of schools informed Judge Nicholson that “the board feels unable to make any change in present policy according to which pupils in its schools are required to take part in patriotic observances, such as saluting the flag and singing the National Anthem”.⁸³ On rare occasions, students were also disciplined under the more serious Defence of Canada Regulations, which sus-

77 “Report of the Superintendent of Schools”, *PBSC Annual Report, 1949–40*, p. 6. This point has also been made by Robert Kirk in “Getting in the Scrap”, p. 224.

78 EMSBA, S-0052, *Minutes of the School Board of Trustees of Outremont* (March 1993 – June 1948), November 12, 1940.

79 *Ibid.*, December 9, 1940.

80 *Ibid.*, November 12, 1940.

81 EMSBA, S-0135, *Minute Book of PBSC*, vol. 12 (July 7, 1938 – July 10, 1942), June 10, 1941.

82 EMSBA, S-0136, *Minute Book of PBSC*, vol. 13 (September 23, 1942 – October 23, 1945), July 13, 1943.

83 *Ibid.*, September 22, 1943.

pended *habeas corpus* and jury trials, permitted internment of enemy aliens, prohibited all organizations deemed by the state to be subversive, and invoked censorship.⁸⁴ This action begs the question: what could a student have done to be accused and found guilty of a potentially treasonous act under this law? The school board saw fit to expel a Grade 11 student at the Commercial High School following his conviction under these regulations.⁸⁵ These three examples provide evidence of just how far commissioners would go to discipline students who did not participate in patriotic exercises at school or, as the case of the student above, in the community.

If other pupils harboured any doubt about the importance of defending the cause of war, the St. Lambert School Board countered it with the purchase of 1,000 copies of *There's An Empire Back of the Union Jack*.⁸⁶ That same year, the director of music for Montreal's Protestant schools, Irvin Cooper, wrote the lyrics and music to a companion song with the same title that promised to become a national hit, rivalling, according to the *Gazette*, the success of Vera Lynn's song, "There'll Always Be an England".⁸⁷ To sustain a high level of patriotic sentiment at school, children memorized and sang Canadian and British patriotic songs such as "The Maple Leaf Forever", "Rule Britannia", "The British Grenadiers", "The Red, White and Blue", and "Men of Harlech" in music classes, assemblies, and concerts, watched patriotic films such as the 1939 Royal Visit in school auditoriums, and listened to patriotic addresses given by prominent speakers.

Public expressions of patriotism shaped how youth made sense of the war in Europe. School authorities made certain that those attending Protestant schools would not avoid involvement in the war effort; many aspects of war work took place in local schools. Writing about young people in wartime Ontario, historian Charles Johnston argues that children and youth were submitted to unrelenting messages of the "values and commitments that they were to embrace".⁸⁸ Similar rhetoric resonated in the lives of English-speaking Quebec children and youth. By contrast, the minutes of the city's Catholic school board are silent about World War II and the war effort. Notwithstanding a few references to its students purchasing war savings stamps and to school-age children engaging in community war work, school commissioners made no official statement about Canada's declaration of war, nor did they encourage their students to engage in the war effort. Rather, Catholic school authorities, ambivalent themselves about the war, were obviously sensitive to the anti-conscription sentiment that pervaded the Francophone community.

Too young to participate directly in the war, every pupil likely knew

84 On September 3, 1939, two days after the institution of the *War Measures Act*, the federal government followed with the Defence of Canada Regulations (Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, p. 15).

85 EMSBA, S-0135, *Minute Book of PBSC*, vol. 12 (July 7, 1938 – July 10, 1942), May 20, 1941.

86 RSBA, *Minutes of the School Commissioners of St. Lambert*, February 4, 1941.

87 *Montreal Gazette*, February 26, 1941.

88 Johnston, "The Children's War", p. 367.

someone who had enlisted, be it a father, brother, relative, neighbour, or teacher, just as death on the battlefields touched children's lives. Young people would have worried as they coped with separation from their fathers and with their own grief when fathers were missing, injured, or killed in action. Families listened to radio news coverage of the war and scanned local newspapers for any information about their loved ones.

Another aspect of the horror of warfare was brought home to pupils when British guest children travelled to Canada to escape the bombings. The presence of these children served as a constant reminder of the war's victims. It also greatly enhanced the divide between Protestants and the French Catholic communities, which took none of the guest children.⁸⁹ In 1940 the provincial director of Protestant education, Dr. W. P. Percival, sent a letter to all Protestant school boards announcing the imminent arrival of these children and seeking offers of accommodation.

I feel that no more patriotic obligation faces school boards than that of providing proper educational facilities for the young who are thus being entrusted to our care. They are likely to develop into the type of immigrant that our country would like. The Protestant Committee is anxious that school boards shall extend all the facilities possible to these guest children in the spirit of true patriotism.⁹⁰

With no extra money to help pay for board or tuition, school boards, teachers, pupils, and communities alike faced a considerable burden. Nonetheless, Protestant boards rallied to this request; school boards were, after all, educating British subjects, not unlike themselves.

The enthusiasm and devotion of the community notwithstanding, the arrival of guest children generated tensions for the evacuees and their host families. The role of Canadian parents towards their guests was ambiguous as the guest children's integration into households strained budgets, and the evacuees fretted over separation from and safety of their parents and relatives. At school, minutes of school board meetings reveal little about how guest children adapted and to what degree they were accepted by Canadians. By contrast, Jeffrey Keshen's study shows that, when guest children excelled scholastically, Canadian students responded with rejection. Even their British accents became a target of ridicule.⁹¹ Nonetheless, most guest children adapted to Quebec schools despite differences in curriculum and culture; they felt most at home, as Geoffrey Bilson points out, at school ceremonies with their customary exhibitions of patriotism.⁹² The welcome given to

89 Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, p. 196.

90 McGill University Archives [hereafter MUA], letter from Walter Percival to the School Commissioners and Trustees of the Protestant Schools of the Province of Quebec, July 18, 1940.

91 Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, p. 196.

92 Geoffrey Bilson, *The Guest Children: The Story of the British Child Evacuees Sent to Canada During World War II* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1988), pp. 83–133.

guest children from Britain was not, however, extended to Catholic or Jewish children from Europe.⁹³ The Outremont school trustees, for example, accepted 13 British guests and agreed to supply them with free books if conditions warranted it,⁹⁴ but refused to offer the same consideration to an Hungarian Jewish refugee who attended the Strathcona Academy.⁹⁵

Protestant communities worked with schools and volunteer organizations to mobilize their youth with sports programmes, quasi-military organizations such as the cadets and Boy Scouts, benevolent student associations, and the war effort. They substituted for absent fathers by providing what Varda Burstyn designates as extra-familial social fatherhood.⁹⁶ The mobilization of youth also served to stockpile crucial materials required by industry and to build character, according to American historian Robert Kirk, “through encouraging diligence, enhancing patriotism, developing a sense of common purpose, lessening younger children’s fears and insecurity, and preventing delinquency”.⁹⁷ School boards also devised and imposed a system to regulate their pupils during wartime. While Protestant pupils seemingly embraced war work with enthusiasm, it is clear that their involvement in the war effort was not only regulated by school authorities but endorsed by family, relatives, neighbours, and friends.

Work and Morals: School as a Socializing Agent

Three days after the Canadian government declared war on Germany, the Protestant Board of School Commissioners expressed its support and resolve to do whatever was needed to win the war:

[P]ray that Almighty God will bless and sustain them, and all the members of the Royal Family during these dreadful days of war and sacrifice — at the same time, to place on record its entire agreement and satisfaction declaring war upon Germany. The board unreservedly states its definite intention to cooperate with the Government in every possible way, and to use all its influence and resources to bring, as speedily as possible, a successful issue to the war for freedom and tolerance in which the Dominion of Canada — together with the whole of the British Empire — is now engaged.⁹⁸

By tolerating neither incertitude nor discussion about the morality of solving international conflicts by waging war, school authorities were unequivocal:

93 See Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933–1948* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2000).

94 EMSBA, S-0052, *Minutes of the School Board of Trustees of Outremont* (March 1933 – June 1948), September 4, 1941.

95 *Ibid.*, November 9, 1942.

96 Mark Moss refers to Varda Burstyn, coining this term in his book, *Manhood and Militarism*, p. 113.

97 Kirk, “Getting in the Scrap”, p. 223.

98 EMSBA, S-0135, *Minute Book of PBSC*, vol. 12 (July 7, 1938 – July 10, 1942), September 13, 1939.

involvement in the war effort constituted the only acceptable projects for pupils at school. Principals, teachers, parents, relatives, community leaders, and government officials all reiterated the importance of war work. Students were solicited to participate in parades and rallies and to volunteer in a range of community and school activities. By 1942 the appeal to children and adolescents for their patriotic involvement took on a new urgency in light of the Dieppe debacle, the German invasion of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and with it the Battle of Stalingrad, and Japan's victories in South-east Asia. The Quebec Committee for Allied Victory, for example, issued a plea to several school boards in the Montreal area that the war effort could be "greatly intensified" by establishing Victory Clubs to "stimulate recruiting for the armed forces ... [and] participate in the purely civilian duties of the Red Cross, the Salvage Campaign, the buying of War Savings Certificates, and so on, the Committee targeted one such club for each High School".⁹⁹ By deliberately issuing war savings stamps valued at 5, 10, and 25 cents, the government drew children into another important aspect of war work; they could purchase the stamps with the pennies and nickels that came their way and receive a valuable lesson in thrift at the same time.

At Protestant schools, principals and teachers promoted the war effort, encouraged classroom discussions about its importance, and acted as role models. Moreover, their daily contact with children had shown them how to engage pupils in war work. For instance, school authorities encouraged competition by restating the importance of pupils and parents contributing money to Victory bonds and by releasing details about campaigns, programmes, and contests held in each of their schools. Children made posters depicting their war work; the best from each school were selected for public exhibition at the T. Eaton's store in downtown Montreal.¹⁰⁰ Children also responded to their interventions by collecting scrap materials for war industry and magazines to send to soldiers overseas, buying and selling war savings stamps and Victory bonds, raising funds for charities, soldiers, and their families, and purchasing goods such as cigarettes to send to military personnel stationed overseas. Adolescent students organized school dances with the dual purpose of entertainment and fund-raising for war relief causes. The effectiveness of child mobilization can also be seen in Verdun students' response to the war. These working-class youth were particularly diligent in the war effort, all the more remarkable given the substantial unemployment and poverty that they and their families had endured during the depression. As the war revitalized the Canadian economy, unemployed men and women in Verdun found employment, and students bought \$89,672.44 in war savings stamps and certificates; their teachers donated nearly \$1,000 to the Canadian Red Cross.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ MUA, MG3074, Marion T. Roberts to H. A. Hatcher, January 20, 1942.

¹⁰⁰ *PBSC Annual Report 1941-42*, p. 9.

¹⁰¹ EMSBA, *Minutes of the Verdun School Board*, April 19, 1945; June 21, 1945.

Across the island, pupils formed school clubs such as the Junior Red Cross, adolescent girls knitted garments for soldiers and refugees, and students raised funds for specific projects. West Hill High School students, for example, collected enough money to purchase an ambulance for overseas duty as their contribution to the war effort. Sponsored by the Junior Red Cross branch of the school, the children held two salvage drives, which netted 74 tons of waste paper. The second drive was carefully managed by students: "More than 1000 youngsters took part in the most recent salvage drive. They went from house to house collecting paper, and left it at certain established key points. At these places, it was picked up by trucks manned by pupils and teachers and taken to the salvage headquarters. The trucks were loaned by the paper company which later purchased the salvage." With the proceeds of other war activities, the students collected over \$1,500 to purchase the ambulance.¹⁰²

Similarly, senior students attending the Strathcona Academy in Outremont, the vast majority of whom were Jewish, amassed enough money to establish a dental clinic for Allied prisoners of war in Germany. This contribution was especially poignant given the genocide that the Nazis were waging against European Jewry and of which the students would have been aware.¹⁰³ We have no idea how Jewish students responded to the information or what effect it might have had on their involvement in the war effort. We do know that in 1944 the Canadian Jewish Congress published a series of comic books about decorated Jewish military personnel serving in the British, Canadian, and American armed forces. While these comics served multiple purposes and were directed at different groups, they presented Jewish soldiers as heroes and role models for the thousands of Jewish school children who attended Montreal Protestant schools. These soldiers provided a valuable lesson in citizenship by reinforcing loyalty to dominion and empire.¹⁰⁴

School officials understood that it was not enough to keep pupils occupied in the war effort. Schools became venues for a range of leisure activities that fell outside the traditional academic realm. School boards, at the insistence of school principals, began to hire specialists to organize sports programmes for their adolescent charges. When Miss Powell asked the school board to permit boxing at the St-Lambert school, commissioners authorized the purchase of two sets of boxing gloves.¹⁰⁵ Months later parents expressed their

¹⁰² *Montreal Gazette*, March 18, 1942.

¹⁰³ According to historians Irving Abella and Harold Troper, the World Jewish Congress asked Jewish communities around the world, in March 1942, to commemorate the destruction of Polish Jewry at Passover and to inform their governments of the genocide. In Canada, Jewish newspapers chronicled graphic descriptions of the horror, issued press releases, and lobbied the federal government to denounce the Nazi genocide (*None is Too Many*, p. 97).

¹⁰⁴ Comics also served to demonstrate to fellow Canadians that Jewish citizens were doing their part in the war and to recruit young Jewish men to the armed forces, as Gerald Tulchinsky argues in *Branching Out: The Transformation of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1998), illustration insert.

¹⁰⁵ RSBA, *Minutes of the School Commissioners of St. Lambert*, December 8, 1943.

approval that such an activity was taking place at school. Senior students solicited funds from school boards to run extramural sports programmes. Community organizations such as Neighbourhood House, already cramped for space before the war, turned to the Protestant school commissioners for help in meeting the growing needs of its constituency owing to the war. Its credo was “[I]f children can be kept busily occupied in recreational and instructional activities during their leisure hours, we automatically vanquish the problems of juvenile delinquency, the worries of mothers and fathers for the safety and welfare of their youngsters, the concern of a community for the future independence and well-being of its citizens of to-morrow.”¹⁰⁶ Neighbourhood House offered a variety of complementary activities, ranging from after-school programmes that included crafts, science, and technology classes to social groups for teenagers and babysitting services. The school board agreed to accommodate Neighbourhood House at its Mount Royal, Devonshire, and Bancroft schools, where volunteers ran Girl Guides, Rangers, Wolf Cubs, Boy Scouts, and athletic and recreational programmes.¹⁰⁷ Schools also coordinated activities with organizations such as the YMCA. Within weeks of the Canadian government’s declaration of war, Mr. Patterson of the YMCA in Lachine wrote to the superintendent of Protestant schools, H. G. Hatcher, stating that, with the prospects of fathers and older brothers going to war in the foreseeable future, organizations like the YMCA had “a greater responsibility for the leisure time of the teen age boys and girls of the community”. Patterson and Hatcher believed that, with fathers away and mothers engaged in war production, boys and girls would become delinquent. As has been argued elsewhere, the YMCA undertook this role in earnest.¹⁰⁸ Hatcher proposed that the school allocate two evenings a week to the YMCA to run programmes for students.¹⁰⁹ With the help of individuals such as Hatcher, as well as various local churches, the YMCA ran vacation schools during the summers, where children were instructed in swimming, hobbies, and Bible study.¹¹⁰ In nearby Lasalle, it established craft projects for younger boys and girls in an eight- or nine-week programme that spanned the summer.

These programmes usually involved gender-specific activities that reinforced prevailing notions about masculinity and femininity, emphasizing the relative importance of boys to the war effort and of keeping girls in their

106 Canadian Jewish Congress Archives, “The Neighbourhood House of Montreal Corporation President’s Annual Report, 1943”, *27th Annual Report of the Federation*, p. 51.

107 Canadian Jewish Congress Archives, “Neighbourhood House Annual Report of President, 1940”, *24th Annual Report of the Federation*, p. 47.

108 Roderick MacLeod and Mary Anne Poutanen, *A Meeting of the People: School Boards and Protestant Communities in Quebec, 1801–1998* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), pp. 235–236.

109 MUA, MG3074, Correspondence, September 21, 1939.

110 MUA, MG3074, Patterson to Hatcher, September 1942.

domestic roles. Boys were taught art, notch and soap carving, woodworking, lino-cutting, and model plane building.¹¹¹ Girls, as future wives and mothers, were taught skills such as art, dressmaking, cooking, hooking and braiding rugs, dramatics, and music appreciation. At school, girls also knitted hats, mittens, socks, scarves, and sweaters. During the war, women's organizations such as the Local Council of Women lobbied school boards across the province to establish household science courses in their schools. Female students also needed to learn, it argued, how to manage a home of their own given that adolescent daughters were required, as "Canada's Teen-Aged Home Front Soldiers", to shoulder much of the family's domestic chores while mother worked in war industry.¹¹² At the same time, home economics courses would counter any notions that girls might harbour regarding a woman's proper role, which the war might have upset. The backlash against women's inroads into traditional masculine work was likely borne by girls. For boys, manual training programmes, which had been developed decades earlier, took on a new impetus during the war, sometimes in partnership with industry. The Dominion Bridge Company's chief engineer recommended that a technical school be added to the curriculum at the Lachine High School.¹¹³ Boys in Montreal high schools built engines and other parts for airplanes and made models of Allied and Axis aircraft for use in recognition work by airmen attending air force training stations.¹¹⁴ These newly acquired technical skills proved advantageous to male youth by providing better employment possibilities in war industry. In the long term, access to technical training also served them well as future breadwinners; in the short term it helped to emphasize their proximity to becoming full patriotic citizens. American scholar Karen Anderson suggests that the war enhanced gender divisions by valuing men's activities as both "warriors and guardians".¹¹⁵

To keep morals in check and perhaps to offer some sort of grief counselling to students who lost relatives in the war, some schools seem to have allocated greater presence to Protestant religious doctrine and clergy. Institutions such as the Lachine YMCA offered a "Gra-Y" club at the Central Park School for boys, which emphasized physical, mental, moral, and social training. It was not enough to provide physical and mental training; boys needed education in the social and moral or religious realm as well.¹¹⁶ In this vein, school officials set their regulatory gaze on pinball machines, which the Protestant Board of School Commissioners in Montreal urged municipal authorities to prohibit. Taking a position first proposed by education professor John Hughes of

111 EMSBA, *Minutes of the Verdun School Board*, April 20, 1944.

112 Johnston, "The Children's War", p. 363.

113 MUA, Records of the Lachine High School, correspondence between Fred Newell and R. S. Tuer, March 13, 17, and 30, 1943.

114 *Montreal Gazette*, September 24, 1942.

115 Anderson, "The Family in Wartime", p. 75.

116 MUA, Lachine High School Records, Correspondence, February 1, 1940.

McGill University, commissioners argued that the prevalence of “gambling machines” had a deleterious moral effect on adolescents.¹¹⁷

School commissioners also worried about sex and its consequences: promiscuity, pregnancy, and venereal disease. The economic independence and freedom from parental surveillance afforded adolescent students meant they were vulnerable to the public’s exaggerated perceptions of teenage licentiousness.¹¹⁸ Two problems in particular focused attention on the female delinquent: freedom due to a generation of allegedly neglectful working mothers and the dramatic rise of venereal disease in Montreal during the war. Ironically, dating was encouraged as the means to promote heterosexuality, marriage, and family life. Even the local reform school for Protestant girls, the Girls’ Cottage School, was sensitive to the dating difficulties of teenage girls and thought it might be a good idea to have supervised programmes organized for proper heterosocial encounters.¹¹⁹ Still, teenage girls in Montreal were apparently “khaki-mad”, given soldiers’ enhanced social status embodied in their uniform, rank, military accoutrement, youthfulness, and heterosexuality, and were thought responsible for a decline in morality. These same girls were blamed for thwarting the war effort by being a conduit for venereal diseases, making soldiers and civilians sick.¹²⁰ To counter this problem, the city’s Protestant school board granted a request by the municipal Department of Health to give pupils above the age of 14 instruction on venereal diseases, consisting of “a short talk about ten minutes by a physician and two films, *Plain Facts and Health Is A Victory*”.¹²¹ In Pointe-Claire, school commissioners met with representatives from the Boy Scouts, the United Church, the IODE, and similar organizations to discuss juvenile delinquency and bad behaviour among the local youth. Believing that the root of the problem was sex, Reverend Rose argued for the introduction of sex education in the schools and volunteered to circulate pamphlets on the subject. Mr. Scott, in charge of the local Sunday School programme, suggested that schools needed to show films on venereal disease. Others, including the school principal, felt that the “sex problem” was no worse than elsewhere and that the real problem was the war; the best course of action was to get children involved in the various organizations, and especially in sports.¹²²

117 *Montreal Gazette*, September 24, 1942.

118 Christabelle Sethna, “Wait Till Your Father Gets Home: Absent Fathers, Working Mothers and Delinquent Daughters in Ontario During World War II”, in Lori Chambers and Edgar-André Montigny, eds., *Family Matters: Papers in Post-Confederation Canadian Family History* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 1998), p. 26.

119 National Archives of Canada, Fonds Girls’ Cottage School, MG 28, I 404, vol. 1, file 1–32, “Memoranda for Discussion at Board Meeting. Wed. Oct 7, 1942”.

120 Sethna, “Wait Till Your Father Gets Home”, p. 19.

121 EMSBA, S–0236, *Minute Book of PBSC*, vol. 13 (September 23, 1942 – October 23, 1945), December 12, 1944.

122 Lester B. Pearson School Board Archives, *Minutes of the School Commissioners of Pointe Claire and Beaconsfield*, November 23, 1923.

The relative freedom afforded by the war also made it more imperative than ever that school boards regulate the social events that took place within school walls, especially “teen-age dances”. Given the concern over young people’s behaviour away from adult supervision, school boards willingly provided a properly monitored venue for such events. High school auditoriums served as an important supervised setting for students to hold dances. Even the ill-humoured school trustees in Outremont were willing to pay the cost of heating the Strathcona Academy on a Saturday evening in January when the boys’ athletic association asked permission to hold a dance in the auditorium. Ironically, the trustees had refused a similar request from the girls’ athletic association, which wanted to host a social event in the gym on a Saturday evening the same month, citing that it would be too costly.¹²³ Perhaps the school board was more preoccupied with keeping an eye on the boys than on the girls. Jewish students could also find accommodation for a variety of mixed teenage social groups at Neighbourhood House.

School boards also sought male teachers and principals from a rapidly diminishing pool of candidates to serve as role models for and disciplinarians of male pupils. The Protestant Board of School Commissioners wrote in its 1941–1942 annual report, “With the increase in juvenile delinquency and other indications of relaxed discipline, largely due to removal of fathers from the homes by military service, it is more than ever desirable that as many men as possible be kept in the schools to influence and direct the boys.”¹²⁴ Prevailing notions about masculinity and its link to soldiering were also reinforced in popular magazines, comic books, serial accounts in newspapers, and adventure and espionage books in addition to *The Allied Boys Series* and *The Boy Scouts Series* of the period and by the rigorous programmes of the Boy Scouts and cadets, which stressed patriotism, courage, industry, and discipline. War was presented as a romantic and sanitized version of reality.¹²⁵

From the perspective of school boards, community organizations, politicians, and civil servants, the best method to occupy boys was still the cadet corps and the Boy Scouts. Their stated goals were twofold: “in producing a patriotic spirit” and “in providing basic military training helpful to boys who may later enlist in the Armed Forces”.¹²⁶ By 1942 the Department of Education accepted air cadet training as part of the high school curriculum, and McGill University acknowledged it as a matriculation subject. The Protestant Board of School Commissioners decided to make it mandatory: “That every boy in Grades X, XI, and XII not medically unfit for the Air Cadet work must be a member of the School Cadet Corps and may be permitted to

123 EMSBA, S-0052, *Minutes of the School Board of Trustees of Outremont* (March 1933 – June 1948), January 15, 1943.

124 “Report of the Superintendent of Schools”, *PBSC Annual Report, 1941–42*, p. 113.

125 Lewis, “ ‘Isn’t this a terrible war?’ ”, p. 200.

126 “Report of the Superintendent of Schools”, *PBSC Annual Report, 1939–40*, p. 9.

join any other cadet corps only for very special reasons.”¹²⁷ High school cadet training proved to be an effective regulatory regime. The following month, the school board noted that its four high schools had enrolled 1,383 boys in cadet training.¹²⁸ Military officers taught signalling, first aid, and military procedures and operations, courses to make soldiers out of boys. Elsewhere on the island, school officials such as the trustees of the Outremont school board saw a federally operated cadet programme as a solution to a number of potential problems:

The Board being of the opinion that it might be advisable in the inculcation of patriotism generally owing to the British Empire being engaged in warfare most serious and widespread — and having regard to the indication of subversive tendencies — to go into the question of the formation of a Cadet Corps at the Academy composed of boys of the High School Department.¹²⁹

That 220 Strathcona Academy students enthusiastically responded to the announcement speaks to the programme’s appeal to adolescent males and to their romanticization of war. The cadet training programme was important for masculine socialization and ultimately a crucial step toward eventual enlistment in the armed forces. The Outremont school board, like others, issued cadet uniforms, reorganized the curriculum to include military subjects, and constructed shooting ranges on its properties. Leaders in the Jewish community also encouraged boys to join the cadet league at the YMHA in Montreal, open to both Jews and Gentiles. Cadet activity appealed to boys’ fantasies of war. Energetic young men steeped in this rhetoric could act on embellished notions of war while waiting to enlist as soon as they turned 18 (or they could lie about their age and join before their eighteenth birthday). As part of the war effort, senior boys were also solicited to volunteer on farms during summer harvest. Part of the allure may have been to get away from home; for others, it might have been the high school credits that they received for the work. Others heeded a call to work at local post offices during the Christmas rush, which was both a patriotic act and the means to earn money.

Like the cadets, the Boy Scout movement with its military accoutrements — uniforms, structure, vernacular, and activities — usually found a home in the local Protestant schools as well, although, once again, Outremont proved to be the exception. When the YMHA Boy Scout troop requested accommo-

127 EMSBA, S-0136, *Minute Book of PBSC*, vol. 13 (September 23, 1942 – October 23, 1945), November 18, 1942.

128 *Ibid.*, December 9, 1942.

129 EMSBA, S-0052, *Minutes of the School Board of Trustees of Outremont* (March 1933 – June 1948), November 12, 1940. The number of boys enrolled in cadets in each high schools was as follows: West Hill, 471; High School of Montreal, 465; Baron Byng, 263; Commercial High School, 84. As well, there were 100 members of the cadet band.

dation at Guy Drummond School for its meetings, the trustees, already ambivalent about the number of Jewish pupils attending their Protestant schools, told officials at the YMHA to apply to the synagogue for space.¹³⁰ The link between the Boy Scouts and war was well understood as a movement that emerged out of the experiences of its founder, Lieutenant-General Robert Baden-Powell, on African battlefields during the Boer War. One of his goals was to prepare male youth for war. Quebec scoutmasters were driven by similar aspirations, which included instruction in firearms. In the interwar years, they asked and received permission from the St-Lambert school board to allow the Boy Scouts to use the rifle range as long as they were properly supervised and ammunition did not exceed 22 or 303 calibre.¹³¹

By 1944 Montreal's Protestant school board's enthusiasm for war work was beginning to give way to "war-effort fatigue". Schools had served as important community centres in which to distribute ration books, provide public health care, and organize and carry out war work. Already accommodating a large number of community organizations, ranging from the Art Association of Montreal to the Juvenile Court, school commissioners were continually inundated with more requests to use their facilities for the war effort. Commissioners complained that, in the four months ending 1944, the board had received 25 more applications for the use of its buildings by outside organizations than the total of 225 it had received during the whole 1943–1944 term. Already, 26 of the Montreal board's schools were being used weekly by 137 organizations.¹³² They worried about the cost of keeping schools open past regular school hours and paying for janitorial services, lighting, and heating. By 1944 as well, their attention had shifted from the war effort to post-war reconstruction.

Conclusion

The social panic around absent fathers, women's participation in the labour force, and neglected children, while based on somewhat spurious evidence, incited politicians, school and juvenile justice authorities, and the media to act. The Second World War saw the production of a persistent discourse on delinquency as a terrible affliction caused by wartime demands on parents and schools. Fighting delinquency thus turned into a home-front imperative. World War II coincided with the election of a reformist government in Quebec, which used its mandate to pass child-specific legislation. Along with a municipal juvenile nocturnal curfew, new legislation included the expansion of the age category of juvenile delinquents to include those under 18 and compulsory schooling for children to age 14. These gestures towards pro-

130 EMSBA, S-0052, *Minutes of the School Board of Trustees of Outremont* (March 1933 – June 1948), December 9, 1940.

131 RSBA, *Minutes of the School Commissioners of St. Lambert*, May 4, 1921.

132 *Montreal Gazette*, December 9, 1944.

tecting and promoting childhood contained both coercive and benevolent strategies to constrain children during the war.

In Protestant Montreal, schools and organizations acted quickly to prevent delinquency and indoctrinate youth with lessons of patriotism and citizenship. By getting students involved in the war effort, training boys for future soldiering, and developing recreation programmes, communities and their schools designed a structure to intervene in the lives of children while fathers were away and mothers worked outside the home. Whether or not these interventions succeeded in warding off misbehaviour, they gave the reassuring impression that action was being taken. Such action relieved anxiety around absent fathers, adolescents, and working mothers and in the process reinforced traditional gender roles that might have been upset by the war. Following naturally on these wartime initiatives, the post-war curriculum would continue to emphasize girls' future role as wives and mothers and boys' as heads of households and disciplined citizens. Children were profoundly affected by their wartime experience. Many home-front school children came to see World War II as the "Good War" and were strongly imbued with a sense of patriotism as well as a conservatism characterized by a belief in authority and in conventional institutions such as marriage, family, and traditional gender relations.¹³³

133 Tuttle, "Daddy's Gone to War", pp. 254–263.