THE GEDOLEI PERIOD

OF

THE JEWISH PEOPLE'S SCHOOL

IN MONTREAL

David August

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ABSTRACT

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THE GENEAL PERIOD OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE'S SCHOOL IN MONTREAL

It is the purpose of the following work to deal with the early development of the Jewish People's School from its founding during World War I to approximately 1930. An awareness of the circumstances of the Montreal community and the Jewish communal forces within it are necessary if one is to appreciate the evolution of this significant institution in the life of the community.

The struggles between the established early Jewish settlers and the newly arriving immigrants is important to assess. The various conflicts amongst ideologically and politically divergent immigrant working class are of some import. Differing cultural and language interests are apparent when observing the very vibrant Jewish community of Montreal. Evolving attitudes to the religious in Jewish life is another pertinent concern of the period. The attitudes of French Canadian Catholics and Anglo Saxon Protestants towards each other and towards the Jews affected the needs of the Jewish community.

The Jewish People's School attempted to answer some of these needs of the Jews in Montreal. The school was affected by the communal environment and, in turn, affected it most significantly. In understanding the processes of the school's early evolution, one gains some insights into the development of the Montreal Jewish community in the early decades of the twentieth century.
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Chapter I

THE MONTREAL COMMUNITY - ITS RELATIONSHIP TO JEWISH

Political - Economic - Social

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the Montreal of the French and English was evolving as an industrial and trade centre and important inland port. The English support of the British in the Boer War and the French in opposition to it was one indication of the cleavage between the two ethnic groups at the time. Henri Bourassa, the nationalist leader of Quebec, expressed antagonism to the federal government and the English. This antagonism was focused on the underprivileged economic conditions of French Canadians within the changing social structures of its society.

With the beginning of the second decade, Montreal was in the midst of unemployment and inflation. The city government was corrupt, graft was rampant, and solutions to the physical problems of the city were not found. The French Canadian expressed hostility to the federal government and the English citadel of Montreal by objecting to the conscription of French Canadians. Many refused to be conscripted into fighting what, in their view, was a foreign war. They saw World War I as a battle of the British and their English compatriots of the city. The French Canadians remained at the bottom rung of the economic ladder, as they moved from the farm to the city and saw many of their English co-citizens living in middle-class comfort.
It seems true that French Canadian economic inferiority and the Catholic Church control moved them towards nationalism and isolationism. This was expressed in the attitude of many French Canadians towards Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the French-speaking Prime Minister of Canada. Laurier felt that many of his compatriots were fanatical, doctrinaire and ultra montano. His very own Liberal party was opposed by many of the French Catholic clergy. Within his own party, Bourneseau, who was also known for his unsympathetic view of Jews, was aiding and abetting isolationism and French Canadian nationalism.

French Canada was defensive towards the encroaching English economic and cultural control. French Canadian clergies, journalists, writers, and other leaders were preaching for a static agrarian habitant economy, so as to preserve their language and religion. At the very time these “city folk” were preaching, the habitant was migrating from the farms to Montreal. It is maintained by some that the French Canadian, be he on the farm or in the proletarian neighborhoods of the city, was kept in bondage by the Catholic Church “with narrow authority and antiquated doctrines which hindered the evolution of French Canadian society.” These “shackles” handicapped the French Canadian in its rivalry with Anglo-Saxons. Underhill notes that the isolationism of French Canadians translated itself in a lack of interest on their part to assimilate the non-French and non-English elements arriving in Canada.  


2 Ibid., p. 51.
The growing Quebec emphasis to protect the rural Catholic basis of the French Canadian nation did not let up with the threatening depression of the second decade of the twentieth century. With the uncontrolled inflation of the first World War, both the French Canadian farmer and the urban worker were affected adversely. The conscription issue may have died, but not its implication for French-English controversy, and not the economic issues.

The ferment of the war period had subsided in the twenties, but the economic纠正 currents were very much alive. The English of Quebec still controlled the economy of the province as rapid industrial strides were made. The nationalist concept of an essentially rural society was continually threatened as the English-speaking manufacturers and industrialists and financiers of Montreal strengthened their control of the Quebec Government.

Attitudes of French to English - The Two Solitudes

"Few of the English-speaking elite learned the French language and few French Canadians found a route to the top in the world of business." The English language remained an absolute necessity in most business operations. French isolationism also did not help to train young people for effective participation within an industrializing society.

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3 Ibid., p. 241.
It is maintained by some that the English felt, because of the British conquest of Quebec in 1763 and because of their majority status within all of Canada, that the country was fundamentally English speaking. They felt that French Canadians would eventually accept English Canadian habits, methods, and forms of organization.⁵ Laurier also had to contend with English Canadian opposition, who claimed that he was giving way to the very French Catholic hierarchy which was, in actual fact, opposing him in Quebec.⁶

There are those who claim that the English Protestant hierarchy was also a forceful influence in the separation of the two cultures. Seigfried makes the following perceptive observation about English Protestants: "If Catholicism is one of the essential factors in the development of the French Canadian, Protestantism does not count for less in that of the English race in the Dominion....To all appearances, the independence of churches (Protestant) in regard to the state has been absolutely established. Perhaps it would not be safe to say quite so positively that the state's independence of them is established in the same degree....The Protestant clergy do not aim at controlling the government in the ultra montane, Catholic fashion, but they do aim at informing it with their spirit." The English, it appears, were protecting their interests by exerting control and influence, rather than by isolationism.

⁵Underhill, The Image of Confederation, p. 49.
⁶Ibid., p. 30.
The national spirit of Anglo-Saxon patriotism vied for control of Quebec society with French Canadian rural Catholicism. Above all, both groupings were interested in exerting their religious and cultural influence upon the state. "Canada, never having had its 1789, has no real comprehension of the theory of the neutrality of the state." The English and French, each in their own way, could not brook neighbors who would not become completely subservient.

The Jew then had the choice of assimilating completely with either community. He chose not to be submerged by the English-French conflict of interests. The Jew protected himself from the effects of a conflict which expressed itself by nationalism, isolationism, authoritarian control, and confessional influence. Most Jews, therefore, opted for an independent organizational and cultural path, and thus the creation of numerous Jewish institutions and Jewish schools, such as the Jewish People's School. To understand the rapid growth of Jewish institutional life, one must therefore also look to the attitudes of the English and French towards the Jews.

**French Attitudes to Jews**

The attitudes of French Canadians to Jews were not friendly, and expressed themselves in outright verbal and virulent attacks upon Jews. The Eucharistic Congress, held in Montreal in 1910, brought Catholics from every part of the world. This ecumenical gathering

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7Ibid., p. 52.
triggered off much anti-Semitic feeling towards the Jews. The church
was, through the early decades, quite outspoken in its attitude towards
the Jews. The following remark by Bishop Cloutier of Three Rivers, told
to the Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Canadienne Française, is
indictive of Catholic anti-Semitism organized by the church: "For my
part, it is a misfortune that we should have opened our doors to this
unhappy people who have come to drain the substance of our race."

French Canadian civic officials were even hostile to Jews in
Montreal because of an antagonism they felt for a foreign dignitary.
We are told in the La Presse Jullien issue of October 14, 1910, that Arch-
bishop Brassard appealed to all Christians to condemn the then Jewish
mayor of Rome. This conflict between the pope and Mayer Nathan was a
rallying point for anti-Semitic sectaries in Montreal. This was but one
of a number of strongly anti-Semitic reactions of some French Canadian
leadership. In this instance, it was the mayor of Montreal and some of
his city council which decided to condemn Mayer Nathan. The French
press obviously identified the Jewishness of the mayor with the Jews
of Montreal. The mass meeting in support of condemnation did not add
any sense of security to the Jews of the city.

The press was often a source for the expression of anti-Semitic
ism, and also influenced in the spreading of prejudices towards the Jews.
La Presse, we are told, appealed to French Canadians to patronize French

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La Presse Jullien (Montreal), October 14, 1910.
Canadian business concerns — not Jewish or English concerns. 11 The Canadian nationalist, Armand Lavergne, attacked the Jews in an article in "L'Action Sociale", a French language newspaper of the time, which later became "L'Action Catholique". He suggested most forcefully that Jews are undesirable citizens of Canada for they do not assimilate. 12

There were rallies, where French Catholic notables, such as one called Plamondon, made inflammatory attacks upon Jews. He accused Jews of being thieves, seducers of women, and Christ killers. In this instance, a Jewish citizen, Ortenberg, brought this attack upon the Jews to the courts. Plamondon had claimed that Jews are a threat to the well-being and very lives of the Christians. Ortenberg claimed in the courts that these remarks were a threat to the well-being and safety of himself as a citizen of the country. 13

The Jews’ feeling of insecurity was strengthened by anti-semitic remarks being voiced in the Parliament of Canada. On March 9, 1916, M. Bule, member of parliament from Mississauga, inquired as to the number of Jews who had volunteered to serve in the army. He suggested that Jews were not making a just contribution to the defense of Canada. 14

11 Ibid., September 30, 1910.
12 Ibid., December 14, 1913.
English Attitude to Jews

The Anglo-Saxon community was also not free of prejudices, albeit of a more subtle variety. They saw the striving Jewish immigrant and his offspring as a threat to themselves. The following quotation is an illustration of the threat, mixed with some awe and respect: "Are Jewish boys cleverer than British boys between the ages of eleven and seventeen because of their greater physiological maturity, or because of inherited racial superiority? It is a difficult problem to solve. Yet in more than one secondary school it has been seriously proposed to handicap Jewish competition for entrance examinations because of proceedings development." Genticles ascribed to Jews almost mystical qualities, which could but lead to being ostracized. This would also influence Jews to look inward to their own institutions.

The Catholic confessional school system made it impossible for Jews to attend their schools. To the Jews of Montreal, it seemed that the Protestant system of schooling, with less stress on religious training, and more open to cultural differences, would be a more natural habitat for their own children. The Jews had no other choice, for the two confessional systems were the only public-supported schools. The Jews expressed their preference for the Protestant School Board, and proceeded to fight for rights within that system. In a judgment handed down in 1908, in the case of Mazer versus The Protestant School Board of the City of Montreal, it was held that there are no public schools in the Province of Quebec, and that the Jewish children have no rights to

attend either the Protestant or Catholic schools, except as a matter of grace.

From the minutes of the Protestant Board of School Commissioners of Montreal of 1903, we can readily assess what the degree of grace would mean. The Protestants were interested in safeguarding their confessional system, as we can see. The system, we are told, would be Protestant and Christian, with religious tolerance for Jewish students. The expressed economic burden to the Board for educating Jewish students was seen by some as a mark of inhospitality. "If the non-Christian elements of the community are made a charge upon the Protestant Board of School Commissioners, while the recompense from them is so small, a burden will be imposed upon us which will seriously prejudice the excellent school system that for some years we have laboriously been striving to establish.... In the absence of the single system of public school which generally obtains on this continent, this constitutes an unjust inequality to our prejudice. At the same time, we hereby readily declare our willingness to educate the children of all citizens, whatever their race or religion, provided we have the means to do so."\(^{17}\) With the influx of non-Catholic, non-Protestant immigrants to the city, the Protestants would accept the responsibility of educating their children. This seemed to them a difficult burden to bear.


Some Jews protested the contention that the Board was losing money because of them, and saw this and other acts as prejudice towards them. The fact that the winelier boy did not receive a deserved scholarship because he was Jewish was seen as another illustration of prejudice on the "tolerated presence of Jewish children." When Miss Sarah Gordon, teacher at Mount Royal School, asked for, on October 5, 1905, a leave of absence on the Jewish Holiday, the Board decided to transfer her to the Barra de Haish Institute School, so as not to upset unduly the school's class. When Rabbi Gaiser wished that his son refrain from studying any religious suggestion in school texts, his son was penalized. Incidents like these were seen by Jews as prejudicial to them. The Protestants wished, on the other hand, to enhance the Christian nature of their schools. The two interests were caught in a bind because there was no neutral system, or a specifically Jewish one.

Some Jews reacted to the divergence of interests between Protestant Board and themselves by striving to set up a separate Jewish school panel. The Jews were given the right to establish their own government schools by a Privy Council decision. Since the Jewish leadership establishment opposed this, in principle, the separate panel plan did not materialize. The Jews could send their children to Protestant schools with the understanding that the Board could pretty well

18 Shulamith Weisman, from Jewish People's School file at Jewish Public Library, Montreal, 1936.

19 Minutes, Protestant Board of School Commissioners of Montréal, October 6, 1905.
In 1873, the Jewish Public Library Association was formed to develop a Jewish school in Oakville. The idea was supported by the government, and the school was established.

It appeared at first the Protestant school leadership and the Jewish school leadership might be able to work together, but the idea was soon realized as impossible. The Protestant schools were under the control of the Catholic Church and the Jewish schools were under the control of the Jewish community. The two groups were unable to work together.

The government tried to establish a Jewish school system, but the Protestant schools were determined to maintain their control. The Jewish schools were also determined to maintain their independence. As a result, the Jewish school system was established in 1873.

In 1920, the Board of Education was established to control the Jewish school system. The Board was headed by a board of trustees, who were appointed by the government. The trustees were responsible for the management of the Jewish school system.

The Jewish school system was established to provide education for Jewish children in Oakville. The schools were located in Oakville and were under the control of the Jewish community. The schools were financed by the government, and the trustees were responsible for the management of the schools.

The Jewish school system was established to protect the rights of Jewish children. The schools were designed to provide education that was consistent with the values of the Jewish community. The schools were also designed to provide an education that was equal to that provided by the Protestant schools.

The Jewish school system was established to meet the needs of the Jewish community. The schools were designed to provide education that was consistent with the values of the Jewish community. The schools were also designed to provide an education that was equal to that provided by the Protestant schools.
system, the well established Jewish 'uptowners' would never agree.

This unhappy union between Protestant and Jew saw the increase of Jewish enrollment within the Board peak in 1920 with 40.6% of Jewish students and decline to 29.8% by 1930. With the number of Jewish students at substantial levels, the Protestants continued to claim losses because of Jews in their system. The Jewish response was to negate their claim. The Jewish leadership did, indeed, indicate that the Protestants were profiting from the Jewish presence. Some Jewish leaders even claimed that the Jews were not being given a fair proportion of the taxes for the education of their children.

An updated, unsigned statement of the twenties, by a committee of Jewish citizens, expressed in practical terms the resolution of the educational problems of the Jews. In their call, one could sense the gap which existed between the Jewish and English Protestant communities. They asked for "equality for Jewish citizens; co-education with children of other faiths in schools of the Protestant Board; no segregation; engagement of Jewish teachers; Jewish representation on the Board; use of some school premises after hours for Jewish instruction."

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24 Same, "Jewish Affairs in Canada," p. 27.
But alienation was not the Jewish Identity

Neither the French nor the English were able to swallow each other and the Jew within their midst as well. Both communities, distrustful of each other, and perceiving each other as a threat, were less than magnanimous and friendly to the Jews of the city. 23

It can, therefore, be easily understood why the Jews of Montreal turned inward. The subtle intolerance of the Englishman or the "anti-Semitic seed" within Catholicism, encouraged the historic propensity of the Jew to remain culturally and socially aloof. The Jew felt the traditional hostility towards him, and thus found comfort with his own. This isolation from the Neutrual community led to the strengthening of Jewish culture and identity. Assimilating trends were prevalent in other parts of the continent could not develop, for there was essentially no receptive group with which to assimilate. The Jew of Montreal structured this solitude by creating numerous institutions of great value to himself and others. One of these institutions was the Jewish People's School.

Chapter II

THE MONTREAL JEWISH COMMUNITY - 1910-1950

From Left to Right

The Jewish community within the Montreal environment was multi-faceted. There were, on the one extreme, rich, well-established assimilationist Jews. At the other end of the polarity were extreme left-leaning Jews and poverty-stricken immigrants. The *Jesodei Acher*, founded in 1907, the long-time Yiddish daily, was the forum for expression of much that transpired in the community. Many insights gained for this work were culled from the readings of numerous issues of this newspaper. The daily was not always consistent in its outlook, and, in this way, was also representative of Montreal Jewry. The daily sometimes was conservatively inclined when dealing with Jewish community and working class issues, but it was a supporter of the more liberal political elements on the Canadian scene. Generally, though, any Jew, established or immigrant, could get a hearing through letter or article.1

1 *Jesodei Acher* (Montreal), 1907-1975.

The Immigrant

The many immigrants arriving in Montreal in the first decades of the present century were in need of philanthropy and education. They
came with little knowledge of Canadian ways and customs, and were quite ignorant of either English or French languages. The following quotation is testimony to the rapid cultural and social growth and advancement of this group of bedraggled immigrants from Eastern Europe: "The social consequences and the consequences to the city's intellectual and artistic life have yet to be measured, but this much emerges — Montreal is no longer simply a bi-cultural city."

The Jewish immigrants coming to Quebec settled primarily in the metropolis of the province. In 1901, there were 7,607 Jews in Quebec and, by 1921, the number grew to 49,977. Jewish immigration was very limited in numbers during World War I. Some years after, it increased immensely. Whereas in 1916, 63 Jews arrived in Canada, in 1922, there was an influx of 8,404 Jews. The immigration was primarily from Russia and parts of Russia which were later part of Poland.

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<th>German</th>
<th>Polish</th>
<th>Russian</th>
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</table>

It is of some interest to note that Jewish immigration to Canada was not entirely welcome, in spite of some of the anti-semitic reactions of certain segments of the Montreal population. The findings...

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"Cooper, Montreal: The Story of Two Montreal Jews, p. 213

"Idem., p. 14

"Anderson, The Education of the Jew, Canadian, pp. 250-1."
Yearbook of 1915 states, as follows: "The Italian and Hebrew immigrants are better known to us because we are more familiar with their history."

Conventions

The immigrants began to settle down, and for many of them their primary concern was not with history or culture, but with livelihood and occupation. The 1931 census tells us that many Jews were involved in merchandising and manufacturing, including the needle trades. There were also substantial numbers in building and construction trades. There was a rapidly growing group of professionals and a smaller number of clerical people. Jews involved in transportation and communication were declining, too, with unskilled workers also at the bottom rung of the statistical ladder. 5

Culture and Organization

Jews of Montreal, although coping in these early decades of the twentieth century with the broad and better issues of settling into a new land, were also beginning to spend their leisure time in cultural and organizational activity. Reuben Brazin, the editor of the **Keneder Amig**, a prominent Hebrewist, comments on the scene at the time. He became an important influence in the community, by compromising with his strong adherences to Hebrew, and becoming an editor of a Yiddish newspaper. He describes in an editorial how organically vibrant the

Jewish community was at the time: "It is the high season of our organizational life; steam and boiling; smoke and gasp-exhalings, assembles, concerts, lectures of all sorts, banquets, resolutions, conferences, balls, tag days, collections, protests,格式, thank-yous, arguments, intrigues, presidents, vice-presidents, secretaries, circulars, hand-bills, posters, advertisements, announcements, etc. etc." Certainly, evidence of a community vitally concerned with its internal organizational life, turning inward to satisfy its many needs. Its only contact with the French and English was business, and, to some minor extent, politics.

One can get some notion of the organizational involvement of Jews in Montreal by reading this partial listing of when certain organizations began to function:

1901 = B'nai B'rith
1903 = Montreal Agricultural Aid Society
1904 = English and Hebrew Day School at Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue
1907 = Ladies Hebrew Sick Benefit
1909 = Baron de Hirsch Institute Free School and Shelter Home for Immigrants
1902 = Hebrew Sick Benefit
1907 = First Hebrew Zion Society
1913 = First Alliance Theatre, founded by Rabbi M. Aschinsky
1917 = Jewish shaken
1900 = First Canadian Zionist Convention in Montreal
1923 = New Baron de Hirsch building opened - Lord Minto affilites
1905 = First Labour Zionist group founded
1906 = First Jewish Public Library
1906 = First Women's Circle Brunch
1907 = August 30 - Canadian Adier commence publication
1909 = Montreal Hebrew Orphanage and Orphanage Home
1911 = Montreal Hebrew Free Loan
1913 = TeVehaki
1913 = Mount Sinai Sanatorium

Jewish Adair, January 27, 1914.
1914 - Canadian Jewish Chronicle
- Hebrew Mutual Hospital
- Pekuc Purim
1915 - Three War Relief Agencies

- and on, and on.

**Jewish Identity**

These organized Jews, many of them, were staunch supporters of Yiddish, quickly learning English. In 1921, there were only 7.47% of Jews in Canada who could not speak English, and by 1931, only 5.22%. They were most likely newly-arriving immigrants. In 1931, there were among Jewish men 95.2% who claimed Yiddish as their mother tongue. Jews were also attached to Jewish religious values, in spite of laxity in synagogue membership and ritual observance. Only 0.07% of Jews stated that they were atheists in the 1931 census. There were 3.7% mixed marriages amongst males and 2.1% amongst Jewish women. All these figures are indicative of a community beginning to assimilate to a new milieu, but seeking to safeguard its own identity as well.

The process of assimilation was not simple. There were Jewish immigrant working people, speaking Yiddish primarily and called usually 'down-timers', or 'green horns', as opposed to the established immigrant and Canadian-born who lived in the better sections of town and were known as 'uptimers'. It is obvious that not always did their

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interests converge, either in the Jewish organizational life or in the
dustry. Amongst the Jewish immigrants themselves there were varying
political and ideological shades and varying degrees of religious ob-
servance. There were, indeed, also differing degrees of emphasis on
language, be they English, Hebrew, or Yiddish.

Attention

During the first quarter of the twentieth century, the major-
ity of Jewish children receiving a Jewish education in Montreal attended
the private shadarin or received instruction from itinerant Hebrew teach-
ers or meludim. By 1930, of 4,360 Jewish children receiving a Jewish
education, 31.9% were receiving private instruction or attending the
shadar. Children were attending five main systems of Jewish education:

1. Yeshiveth - shadarin
2. Congregational schools
3. Talmud Torahs
4. Jewish People's School - Jewish Qurutsa School
5. Yiddish leftist schools

The systems in Montreal proper catered to a declining number of Jewish
children, as the community began to spread into the suburbs and outlying
districts. Thus, the number of students in the Protestant schools of
Montreal, where most Jewish children were receiving their general educa-
tion, was also in decline. It was indeed in 1923 that the number of the
Jewish student population of Montreal reached its peak, and then began to
decline steadily.

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10 Levy L. Becker and Leoie Rosenberg, "Jewish Education in
Montreal," in Jewish Education, Vol. XIII, No. 1, 2 (Winter - Spring,
1930-31), pp. 34, 65.
The Montreal Jewish community was but a microcosm of what was transpiring in most major cities throughout the Western World. Starting with the year 1830, Jewish communities were formed, of which Montreal was typical. Montreal had its distinctive mark because of the dual cultures, but it still followed a general pattern. These communities were made up of 'downtowners' and 'uptowners'; immigrants and yuppies. Jews would leave the core city and move on to the suburb, and therefore the decreasing numbers of Jews by the thirties. Issues of language, differences in socio-economic outlook, and conflicts as to the emancipation of world Jewry were most hotly dealt with throughout the communities. Secular Judaism and the new religious trends vied for position as they threatened the strict traditionalists.  

11David Reznik, Interview, Montreal, April, 1979.
Chapter III

THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN UPTOWN AND DOWNTOWN

In the Beginning

Some of the elite of Montreal, its aristocracy or Yishuv, were of Sephardic and German origin. Many of them had immigrated from Lithuania, were known by some, derivatively, as 'Litvaks', and were the largest element within this elite category. These Jews, who lived in the northern and western parts of the city, were known as 'Uptowners', as distinct from the newly-immigrating Jews of the early decades of the twentieth century. These Jewish immigrants in Montreal came primarily from Romania, White Russia, and the Ukraine, as opposed to the larger Polish migration to Toronto. ¹

The Two Factions

Nechama Ryerson, a prominent leader of the Jewish People's School, confirms that the Jewish community in the first decades was, indeed, divided into two categories. Many old residents wanted to imitate the English and to emulate their customs and behaviour, thus removing from themselves any semblance of Eastern European manner. They

did not want to be foreign and to be given the appendage of "green".

On the other hand, the newly arriving immigrants were primarily concerned with establishing themselves in the new land. These Jews of early Montreal showed little interest in Jewish cultural pursuits. Numbers of the young people became students, professionally ambitious and success-oriented, but with little interest in Jewish culture. It is only by 1913, with a new wave of immigration and the arrival of one strongly stimulating element, that Montreal became more significantly interested in Jewish cultural creativity. 2

Philanthropy - They Do Help

As the Eastern European Jew began to arrive in numbers, he was greeted by his established Jewish brothers. In the first decades of the century, the Baron de Hirsch Institute served as the focal point for aid to the Jews of Montreal. This social service institution was led and supported by the more affluent Jewish residents who were, as we have seen, Canadian-born or had lived in the country for many years. These leaders, through Baron de Hirsch, were instrumental in the formation of a Hebrew school, in addition to their various philanthropic endeavours. The 

Kender Adler of October 9, 1910, contains an article inviting the new Canadians to send their children to the school. 3

Although the "upsteemer" was somewhat benevolent towards the "downsteemer", the bi-direction of the two was, nevertheless, heightened


3Kender Adler (Montreal), October 9, 1910.
by the different socio-economic concerns. It is true that the settled 'upstairs' were of some assistance to the 'downtowners' through philanthropic aid. It is, though, contended that the philanthropic activity was not as great as that of New York, Paris, or London. Nevertheless, the Jewish working man related to the established Jews through the Baron de Hirsch organizationally and philanthropically.

The Conflict

This very same working man met this very same philanthropist of Baron de Hirsch in the factories. The executive members of Baron de Hirsch became here the exploiting, strike-breaking bobs. It is small wonder that the conflict between the two factions moved from the factories to the Jewish institutions. Divergence of interests and ideology exacerbated the conflict between the two segments. The situation was, in effect, a typical model of the conflict between the exploitative do-gooder and the recipient with dignity and spirit.

The Yiddish-English Conflict

The new Jewish immigrant, who had the time or inclination to become organizationally involved, had difficulty adjusting to the 'upstairs' meetings. The 'downtowners' spoke little English, and meetings by 'upstairs' were conducted in English. The first convention of the Zionist Organization, which was held in Montreal, and, indeed, all its previous meetings, were conducted in English. This language problem.

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was but one further reason for the new Canadian to turn to his own and create new social and organizational structures.

**Socio-Ideological Conflict**

Another difference between the two segments was ideological.

The socialist tradition that the Jewish workingman brought from Europe led to the creation of such groupings as Poalei Zion, Bund, and Anarchists. The first branch of Workmen's Circle, an offshoot of Bundism, was founded in Montreal in 1906. These Bundists and Anarchists initially had little interest in Jewish education and culture, and had more concern for general labour issues and socialist ideology.

Some Jews in the community, amongst them the editor of the *Leader Adar*, objected to the introduction of "secular" ideologies into Jewish life. In an editorial of November 29, 1910, the editor criticized the Poalei Zion because of their intention to found a school which was radical. In his opinion, a Jewish school could be neither radical, conservative, nor socialist. He need not have feared, for the Jewish People's School quickly lost its radical and socialist tinge, if we may anticipate.

Jews in Montreal were in agreement about socialism when referring to Zionist ideology and Palestine and the distant future. Dr. Yakub Kofman proposed a minority resolution at the Canadian Jewish Congress meetings, where "upstream", too, were represented. This resolution declared that the future Jewish national home in Palestine

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5 Belkin, *The Labour Zionist Movement in Canada*, p. 190.
shall be owned by the people, with nationalization of industry an important goal. Thus the class struggle, in its most idealistic sense, was assigned to another time and another continent. However, the 'uptown' and 'downtown' conflict became mere contortions with the bread and butter issues of earning a livelihood.

**Labour Unrest - In The Factories**

In addition to abstract ideological differences, there were in the factories serious divergence of practical interests. The newspapers of 1913, for instance, tell us of long-term, bitter strikes, police being called in to harm striking tailors and, in some instances, to arrest them. At the same time, boss and worker were meeting under different circumstances in Jewish organizational activity at the Baron de Hirsch and in other Jewish organizations.

The class struggle would even reach the synagogue at times: "Yesterday, there was held the *Chuppah Kahala* (dedication) of the new uptown synagogue....Mr. Lyon Cohen, however, did not deliver his address, because of the disturbance caused by numerous strikers who were present at the ceremony." Since a strike in the needle industry was then in full swing, and, in view of the fact that Mr. Cohen, the President of the Baron de Hirsch, was chairman of the manufacturers' association, the full anger of these striking workers was being directed

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7 *Templer Almanac (Montreal)*, December 2 and 17, 1913.
against him.

Conflict on Education: For and Against the Separate Panel

Another conflict between ‘upsmers’ and ‘downtowners’ arose around the issue of establishing a separate panel for Jews, in addition to the Protestant and Catholic school boards. The ‘upsmers’ looked with longing towards the English citadel. The ‘downtowners’, more sensitive to the rejection by the English and French, and more attuned to the needs of Jewish cultural development, were interested in the establishment of separate schools for Jewish children of Montreal.

The *Jesod Hadlir* of October 15, 1923, informs us of a huge mass meeting attended by two thousand Jews, mostly downtowners, one would assume. A resolution was passed in favour of separate schools, with only twenty-one opposed. The daily proceeds to tell us that head-


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lumps attempted to disrupt the meeting. The ‘upsmers’ were equally adamant, as an invitation to a meeting at the Montefiore Club on October 9, 1923, would indicate: “It will be the object of the meeting to discuss all matters having reference to the Jewish children in the Protestant schools, and, especially, to take required measures to prevent the establishment of a separate Jewish panel.”

Ambivalent feelings of Protestants to Jews is expressed as

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8 *Jesod Hadlir* (Montreal), January 25, 1927.
9 *Nat*, *The Jews in Canada*, p. 475.
10 *Jesod Hadlir* (Montreal), October 15, 1923.
11 Invitation from 1923 file, *Jewish People’s School*. 
some of them applauded those who opposed a separate panel. The \textit{Jenetta} of October 12, 1923, reports that the Jews view with repugnance "any suggestion of segregation" and are for the "mixing of faiths."\footnote{Montreal \textit{Jenetta}, October 23, 1923.} The 'uptowners' need not have feared, for the governing authorities would never agree to a separate panel. This conflict brought into sharper focus the divergence of views and interests of Jews in Montreal.

\section*{Democratization}

This divergence of views found expression as the 'downtowners' began to strive for democratization of organized Jewish life in Montreal. As the Eastern European Jewish immigrations had taken hold, the 'downtowners' began to assert himself and to aim for a voice in Jewish affairs. Representation before government, the press, and the public, had become the domain of the Baron de Hirsch and its self-appointed legislative committee. The \textit{Jenetta Adler} said it well in an editorial, that the Baron de Hirsch should not be an elite circle for a particular grouping in the community. The 'uptowners', we are told, want to control the 'downtowners' by force. The editorial goes on to ridicule the 'uptowners' by reminding him of his origins. "A former Jew of Shiplahoom becomes today a fine Jew of the Downtown, and tomorrow an uptown Yahudi, and already looks smugly at home upon the 'downtowners'."\footnote{\textit{Jenetta Adler (Montreal)}, December 15, 1923.}

Reuben Brainin, a world renowned Hebrewist and editor of the
Lazar Adler was organizing a "Folks Farband". He was, as were many others, vitally interested in democratizing organized Jewish life in Montreal. The 'uptown' Zionists, on the other hand, feeling threatened by this move, formed their own organization as a counter to Braunin's democratic project. They called the first Canadian Jewish Conference for November 4, 1915, which, we are told, had little representation from the "bread folk elements", and indeed quickly aborted.

Various forces, after much infighting, finally formed a temporary Canadian Jewish Congress on Purim of 1919. Some of the leadership of Jewish People's School were amongst the prime movers of the "Folks Farband", and were also instrumental in the establishment of the democratically representative congress. Dr. Yehudah Kaufman, the founder of the Jewish People's School, was a major influence in the formation of this and other democratic Jewish institutions in Montreal.

Democratization Nears Reality

The democratization within organized Jewish life and the growing affluence amongst Jews following World War I both aided in the upward mobility of members of 'downtowners'. More 'downtowners' began to enter businesses and moved into the middle class. The uptown circle was widening.

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15 Ibid., pp. 29, 446.
Simon Belkin, the revered colonization administrator, has described in his history of Poalei Zion in Montreal the development of the Jewish People's School in its early years. One can deduce from his work, and from the reporting of others, that the 'downtowner', in many instances, began to emulate the 'uptowner'. As the Jewish People's School developed, they began to exemplify the upper mobility of numerous Jews. As the battles for democratization were taking place, there were those who began to invite the 'uptowner' into the upwardly mobile Jewish institutions.

Belkin tells us that, in 1918, the active members of Jewish People's School began to broaden the circle. We are told that the school brought in 'progressively oriented friends from the business world.' An advisory committee of business people was set up. We also learn that there was a 'Thomaisa Lahai' (building dedication) in 1920. $20,000.00 was raised for that purpose, and $15,000.00 of that sum was collected from fifteen people donating $1,000.00 each, in a time of difficult financial conditions. One could deduce from this campaign alone that the school was moving into the hands of the middle class. 17

This pragmatism was also consistent with the ideological stance of Jewish People's School supporters. One could observe that any adherence to direct principles of socialist philosophy became minimal. Middle class values of social justice quickly replaced whatever real socialist concerns there might have been. It should also be noted that the Poalei Zionists amongst school supporters were also interested in social-

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ism for Erets Israel, and very minimally did they espouse socialist
causes in Montreal.

By 1926, only 55% of the students of the Jewish People's School
were from working class families. By 1920, the constituency began to
change from workingman to petty bourgeoisie and middle class. The second
branch of the school moved uptown, away from its original working class
constituency. It would be more difficult to find working class families
in and around uptown Côte-des-Neiges than in downtown Saint Henri Street.

The upper mobility and changing values were apparent in curricula
discussion and articles. One could read of terms such as social
justice, progressive and social conscious, but never the terms socialism
or radical. One detects a humanist liberalism, certainly a far cry from
the ideology of the National Radical School. The "downtown" Jewish
People's School had become, in some respects, an essentially uptown in-
stitution. The school had become representative of progressive middle
class values.
Chapter IV

RELIGION FACES NEW TRENDS

Orthodox and Secular

One who would have viewed Jewish life in Montreal during the early decades of the twentieth century would have been witness to discussions on abstract social issues, nationalist theories and plans amongst secular or non-religiously oriented Jews. One would have also been witness among the religious Jews to discussion and controversy on kashruth and kosher slaughtering and other ritual observances. These two segments disagreed amongst themselves and also fought with each other. 1

The Conflict Regarding Religious Observances

Religious Jews and 'upholders' were threatened by the secularizing tendencies of the Labour Zionists and other ideological groups.

The Poalei Zion was condemned by the Zionist convention of December, 1910, for holding sessions of its own on the Sabbath. This eleventh gathering of Canadian Zionists, on the other hand, began its convention with Sabbath services. The Zionists were not observant enough for some, and a more religious element began to establish itself in 1910 under the aegis of Misradit - the religious Zionist organization. 2

1. Webster, Montreal of Yesterday, p. 32.
These disagreements amongst various religious shadings did not prevent the observant Jews from attacking the secularizing Jews. Abraham Parmess, an active Jewish People's School leader of the time, reports that some segments of orthodox Jewry were accusing the National Radical School of being Christian missionaries. The attack upon the school was made at a mass meeting for the entire Jewish community to protest missionary activity. Dr. Yehudah Kaufman responded to this sharpest of all criticism, and orthodox leaders, we are told, left the platform angrily. Orthodoxy continued its attack, we are told by Mr. Parmess, by expressing anger at Poalei Zion Schools for recognizing May Day as a holiday and not Yom Kippur. This is the more ironic for Mr. Parmess himself, a radical Labour Zionist and long-time lay leader of Jewish People's School, was also the president of an orthodox synagogue.

Educational Choices

There were real differences in the community with the secular-oriented Jews looking to new answers for their cultural needs. The immigrants, conscious of their heritage, began to look about themselves in their new American environment in order to make educational choices for their offspring. They concluded that the public schools were not providing their children with a Jewish education, and some realized that the Talmud Torahs were for the religious, or should be, so. With this attitude, it would not take long before we would see the founding of such in-


4Ibid., p. 19.
stitutions as the National Radical School and its offshoots. Yeal Eritin tells us that it was this quandary of secular Jews vis-à-vis religious education which led to the establishment of the first National Radical School on the continent in New York on December 10, 1910.

Alternative to the Old

The founding of the National Radical School in Montreal, as we can see, was a reactive response to the ideology and practice inherent in orthodoxy, as well as to the lack of Jewish education in the public schools. It was also an answer to the assimilating trend and the ignorance of Jewish knowledge amongst the Jewish working men and the assimilating settled Jews. One must not overlook the significance of the Jewish People’s School as a reaction to the old-fashioned, unprogressive techniques followed in the Talmud Torahs of the time and in the chederim (small private schools). The new schools were also an answer to the Barrow Talmud types, prayerbook in hand, as he went from door to door “selling” lessons. The reading of the prayerbook in Hebrew, without comprehension, was the primary aim of much of Jewish education.

Much of Jewish educational endeavour in the World War I years was geared to this teaching of mechanical reading of incomprehensible Hebrew (Hebrew reading). Thus, each son would, at least, know how to pronounce the memorial prayer in the original. Girls, it is suggested, were taught to write Yiddish, so that they could correspond with friends and

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relatives in Europe. It is indicated that later, because of these expectations, boys were sent to the existing Talmud Torahs and girls to schools where Yiddish was taught. The Jewish People's School, and later the United Talmud Torahs as well as other modern Jewish schools, came to improve the quality of Jewish education, or whatever ideology.

The Early Schools

Although organized institutions for Jewish learning began to flourish by 1914, the beginnings or sparks were there much earlier. There were religious classes conducted by the two oldest congregations, Shearith Israel and Shaar Hashomayim, before 1870. In 1890, a free school for the poor Jewish children was established, where both Hebrew and general studies were taught. That year saw the beginning of the first Talmud Torah, which was the Eastern European Jewish alternative to Baron de Hirsch's attempts and to the congregational schools. By 1904, with the opening of governmental tax supported schools, children were attending this first day school till grade three, and then on to other Protestant schools. When five Talmud Torahs united in 1917, there were an aggregate of eight hundred students in that religious school system. At that time, Jewish People's School and the Parent School had a combined enrollment of seven hundred and forty students.

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New Expectations

These two schools were a response to those who looked at Jewish education and Jewish life with pessimism. Many Jews at the time felt that teaching Judaism to Canadian-born children was futile. This pessimistic attitude, we are told, pervaded the traditional Jewish community, who felt that Canada was not a fertile land for the future of religious Jewish life. Kehot (dietary observance), Yiddish (Memorial prayer for the dead), and Bar-Mitzvah (thirteen-year male confirmation) seemed to be the only goals and expectations of numerous religiously-oriented Jews.9

The Talmud Torah Alternative

The Talmud Torahs, we have seen, began to answer the educational needs of many Jews in the first decades of the twentieth century. It was to be an alternative to the inefficient private teachers and to the small shuls. The Hebrew classes at B'nai de Hirsch were being phased out by the Protestant School Commission. The existing congregational schools did not answer the needs of many.10

Each separate Talmud Torah seemed to be threatened by the existence of another, as they appealed to the Jewish community for funds. The Talmud Torah responds us in an editorial that both the Talmud Torah of Mr. S.K. Belinsky and the other, run by Mr. Hinelehovits, author of the first Yiddish book issued in Canada, are both equally in need of assistance, for they are both Montreal-based and both Jewish schools.

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By 1917, the five Talmud Torahs united under one administration, with a budget of $16,000.00. Lazarus Cohen was the lay founder and Rabbi Hirsch Cohen its spiritual leader. With the union of these schools and under the eventual leadership of Melech Magid, important strides were made to enhance the quality of education. Their goals became more than a smattering of Hebrew and a bit of ritual practice. Traditional texts were taught and modern Hebrew language and literature were introduced.

**Positive Influence**

Shloime Wiseman asserts that the Jewish People’s School had an influence on orthodox schools. He felt that his school gave impetus to other institutions to modernize, both in theory and practice. He also felt in fact that his school influenced the Perets Schools to be more positive towards Jewish nationalism and the Hebrew language.

**A Force for Change**

It is difficult to estimate the effect of one institution upon another, but the fact that the Jewish People’s School was a force for change is definitely evident. It seems as if this change and progress moved forward with one eye on tradition. It was Shloime Wiseman who deserves much of the credit for innovation and respect for traditional values.

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He began his overwhelming influence upon the fate of Jewish People's School during the winter of 1916-1917, as a teacher of Jewish history. He epitomized the involvement of the school in the world of Jewish knowledge with great concern for general learning. In him, one could see the new generation *mashhul* (enlightened Jew) with a regard for tradition and looking outside the ghetto for knowledge, too. While Sholom Wiseman entered McGill University in 1918 to take degrees in literature and philosophy, he continued to study Talmud and other traditional texts intensively.

**Tradition and Change**

There were others through the years in the school who were secular in outlook, but with traditional knowledge and regard for it, too. People like the poet, I.J. Segal and Sholom Gold, the medical doctor, were well versed in traditional texts and involved in developing Yiddish and modern Hebrew culture. They were looking beyond a brief Talmudic training period to a serious concern for the education of the Jewish community. Thus, the schools became also a vital vehicle for the ideological expression of groups of thinking Jews, who had their feet in both worlds. They sought support from Tolstoy and Cymbel to confirm the pedagogical significance of the narrative tales in the Bible. Even Edgar Allan Poe was a source for the methodology in teaching Bible. Shimon Dusky, long-time vice-principal, scholar, and translator, was influencing his colleagues to look lovingly, but critically and analyti-

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13 *Baklan, The History of Labour Menin*, p. 228
cally at traditional texts. Many of the social scientists of the day were carefully read and studied by some of the lay people and professionals around the school. The traditional texts and Eastern European tradition were being looked at with the tools being developed by the humanistic sciences.

The intellectuals of this movement were truly interested in their tradition. In December of 1913, for instance, Dr. Nachman Syrkin came from New York to speak on "The Bible as Literature." The choice of topic proves an interest in the traditional texts, while at the same time taking a scientifically critical look at them. The integration of the "them" world of tradition with the new realities surrounding these Jews is evidenced by the announcement that the proceeds of the Bible lecture would go to aid the Jewish striking workers. Concern for the workers, concern for the Jew, interest in tradition and involvement in modern Jewish scholarship are all symbolized by this lecture announcement.

Religious Values

Although not necessarily preaching the practice of rituals, it becomes evident that the school was sensitive to religious values from the following excerpts of minutes of a faculty meeting:


16 kosher Adler (Montreal), December 7, 1913.
On Monday, Rosh Hashanah should be discussed and explained in all classes. The following four points or themes should be stressed: (a) the year's beginning, (b) spiritual accounting, (c) forgiveness of sin; (d) the attitudes of the religious Jews towards Rosh Hashanah.

In spite of attacks from some orthodox, the school community was positively inclined towards the religious values inherent in the religious heritage. They had adopted a stance different from the abject holdouts as they integrated the contributions of modern culture with tradition. This paralleled various developments in the religious community in North America, such as the rise of Conservative, Reform, neo-orthodoxy, and Reconstructionist. In Montreal, the pioneers of historic Judaism, of rational inquiry into tradition, of change within tradition, were then in and around the Jewish People's School community.
Chapter V

NEW TRENDS IN CONFLICT

The Party

By 1904, Poalei Zionists, although not organized, were meeting at various gatherings of Socialists, Anarchists, Heimfarer Democratic Zionists, Palestinian-oriented and Ugandan-oriented groups. Each one of these groupings was seeking solutions to problems of the Jews abroad in the New World, as they grappled with their history and with the traditions of their past. Would the Jew find escape in the arms of those who would depart completely from the past, as the Anarchists suggested? Would the Jew settle for at least a temporary asylum in Uganda? Or, would the Jew see a socialist Palestine as an answer to his dilemma?

With the arrival in January of 1905 of Laisir Sahar, later one of the founders of the National Radical School and then prominent mainstay of the Farala School, the nucleus of Poalei Zion began to form. These Zionists, who saw a socialist homeland as the answer, became sufficiently strong in Montreal by 1920 to host the fifth North American Poalei Zion convention. This political party in the diaspora made an important decision at this convention when it resolved to establish a school system which would express their ideological aspir-
The Schools

In Montreal local Labour Zionists, following much previous deliberation and encouraged by the convention resolution, moved to establish the National Radical School, which were followed later by its offshoots, the Jewish People's School and the Jewish Forverts School. Poalei Zion leadership also continued in the years 1910 to 1920 to create other cultural institutions such as the Jewish Public Library and the Canadian Jewish Congress.

The Utopia - Socialism

Poalei Zionists in the early years were also helpful in organizing and encouraging support for the trade union movement. One could not deny that this party was concerned, in the early decades, with the needs of the Jewish proletariat. Belkin tells us that "One served socialism with devotion as one continued cultural activity, and trade union work, even as one became involved in nationalist Jewish activity." Later, it became clear that there was little concern with socialist politics in the Jewish People's School. The very leaders who may have been espousing it within Poalei Zion came to forget it within the walls of the school; not so with regard to Zionism, Jewish nationalism, and prophetic inspired social justice.

1. Memoirs, (Montreal), October 24, 1918.
2. Social Jewish Week, 1912-1914, p. 10
School and Party

Naasha Dickstein was a most significant figure within Poalei Zion, and for many years also the leading lay person at the Jewish People's School. It is asserted by Shlomo Wiseman, the long-time principal and major formulator of principles, that Naasha Dickstein was constantly on guard not to allow the Jewish People's School to become a "party" school, but rather a school of the people.3

It is indeed interesting to note that in conversation with Poalei Zionists through the years one has heard emphasis placed on the tie between the Labour Zionist Movement and the Jewish People's School. As evidence of that, we are told that Dickstein, the head of Poalei Zion in Canada, was also the chief lay leader of Jewish People's School.

The assertion of Mr. Wiseman does, though, most strongly indicate that Mr. Dickstein wore two different caps. Although many people were interested in the two institutions, and although Jewish People's School was founded by Poalei Zion leadership, the two institutions became less and less bound to each other ideologically. When Labour Zionists would, through the years, talk about "our school", they were expressing a wish, rather than a reality.

The leaders of the Poalei Zion, such as Dickstein and Schur, attempted to separate the party from the schools. On the other hand, as individuals consistently and as the organized Labour Zionist

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3Rosedor Adler (Montreal), August 7, 1970.
sometimes, they saw it their obligation to support the schools financially. From the Leader Adier of September 5, 1913, we read, "This Sunday there will be a house-to-house collection for the newly-opened National Radical School. Those involved in the fund-raising will be the Montreal Poalei Zion branch and the Jewish National Workmen's Alliance (presently Farband: the social and mutual benefit off-shoot of Poalei Zion) as well as private citizens and sympathizers." Later, for a time, the Peretz School was given complete support. The Yabneah Branch of the Alliance in 1922 accepted full responsibility for the finances of that school. Generally, many Poalei Zionists through the years helped the two schools. These Poalei Zionists were, however, reticent in introducing socialist ideology into the schools.

**Palestianism Versus Territorialism — The Nationalist Socialists**

Within and around the Poalei Zion, there were two elements which took different positions with reference to the national home. There were those who saw a national home for the Jews in Palestine, with Hebrew as the national tongue, incorporating a moderate brand of socialism. The others, called "Territorialists", could see no land of the Jews in the diaspora, with Yiddish as the national language, and a more radical brand of socialism. Suler of the Peretz School who was with the "Territorialists", in due time urged re-

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unification with Poalei Zion; Dickstein of the Jewish People's School was a strict Poalei Zion 'ist Palestini.

With the founding of the National Radical School in 1913, these two elements were expressing their intention of working together. But the Palestine Zionist Socialists could obviously not live with "Territorialist" and strictly Yiddishist peoples. The attitudes vis-a-vis the location of the national home could not be resolved easily.

By 1915, the Hebrewists and non-"Territorialists" of the Poalei Zion separated to form the Jewish People's School. The National Radical School, later to be called the Poalei School, attracted the "Territorialists", the Yiddishists, the more left-leaning socialists, and the anarchists. Poalei School had for some time very strict organizational contact with the "Territorialist" socialists of Toronto.

Dr. Chaim Zhitlovsky, a widely-recognized figure, was the ideological inspiration for the "Territorialist"-Yiddishists at one time; he saw Yiddish as an expression of the revolutionary battles of the Jewish masses. Dr. Reuven Syrkin, prominent Labour Zionist leader, referred to the social teachings of the prophets who spoke Hebrew.

When the schools separated, we are told by Belkin, there was a sense of exhilaration as the founding Poalei Zionists knew that they

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would no longer have to justify the singing of "Hatikvah" in the school
or answer those who called Hebrew a reactionary language. They would
no longer be confronted with diaspora nationalism as an alternative to
Zionism.

The Less Nationalistic Radical Left

Yoel Begin was a New York Yiddish publicist and educator dur-
ing the early decades of the twentieth century in the Jewish working
class milieu of North America. He claims that the early Jewish social-
ist and workers of the 1890's, even to the 1920's, were not very keenly
aware of their Jewish heritage and, in essence, often saw their Judaism
as pure happenstance.

These less intensely national Jews did not manifest any identi-
ity with Jews when involved in union and other working class activities.
They saw themselves as Yiddish-speaking workingmen. Often these very
socialist Yiddishists, in Montreal as well, flirting with the National
Radical School and later Frets School, saw little that was intrinsically
valuable in Yiddish, other than as a means to an end.

Another American publicist, Ab. Cahan, expressed it aptly.
Himself, the editor of the Yiddish Daily Forward, a widely circulated
proletarian Yiddish newspaper, he wrote that even Yiddish would disappear
quickly.

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Etin credits Dr. Shitlovsky with bringing the Jewish working-
man to national awareness. He also contends that it was only as a result
of the pogroms and counter-revolutionary activities in Russia that the
Jewish workingman became more nationally conscious. The Bolshevik turn
of the Russian Revolution also eventually steered other socialists to-
wards Jewish nationalism.

In the meantime, in Montreal in the 1910's, the movement for
Yiddishism and radicalism amongst socialist Jews was strong. Numerous
tailors and clothmakers were even members of extreme radical union
organizations known as the Industrial Workers of the World. These Jewish
proletarians were seriously affected by strikes which involved the Jew-
ish-owned factories as well. Conflicts ensuemed between the workers who were
active Poalei Zionists and supporters of the school to bring their work
world colleagues into the committee of the schools. Clearly, there was
an unwillingness on the part of the same Yiddish-speaking masses to com-
promise labour interests. Yiddish became, in a sense, an expression of
ideological protest against the bosses.

Yiddish was, as Etinlovsky had stated, an expression of mass
Jewish solidarity. Any threat or imagined threat to Yiddish, even by
merely adding Hebrew to the curriculum, could also be seen as a threat
to the condition of the workingman.

The individual working Jew was along a continuum. The

11 Dr. S. Sapir, "The Beginning of the Jewish People's School",
in Drama for Jewish Education, p. 30.
more socialist one was, the more Yiddishist one was; the less nationalist
one was, the more universalist one was. The less socialist one was,
the less Yiddishist and more Hebrew one was; the more nationalist
Zionist one was and the more particularist one was. Both the Jewish
People's School and the Firsts School took varying positions near the
middle of the continuum, with the latter to the right and the former to
the left of centre.

Bundists - Anarchists

The Bundists and Anarchists who expressed the more extreme
views could not agree to enter the field. The Bundists, who had been
functioning through Workmen's Circle before Poalei Zion appeared on the
scene, fought any semblance of Zionism. They founded a "National
School", in opposition to the Poalei Zion National Radical School. The
Communists, as they were called (so as to avoid the Hebrew word shomerim -
sentinels) accused the Jewish People's School founders of being reactionaries.

The Anarchists also supported the only Yiddish National Sunday
School "against the ruling classes."

In spite of objections by these groups, many working people
nevertheless supported the Yiddish-Hebrew schools. The first classes,
after the short-lived Holyend attempt of the National Radical School,
of May, 1913, were held in the Pressers' Union Local. This illustrates
the substantial support from unions and working people. The earlier

Kite Red classes were held in a synagogue, again illustrating the right extension of this continuum. 14

The Yiddish - Hebrew Controversy

We have already observed that Yiddish language and speech were very important elements in the life of the socialist Jews and, indeed, of all early Poalei Zionists. Even those who favoured more Hebrew at all times favoured an important place for Yiddish; the reverse cannot be said.

It appeared, although not entirely, that those who stressed Hebrew would often emphasize a deeper affinity for past Jewish history, for Jewish nationalism in Palestine, for traditional texts. The Yiddish supporters, although not always, tended to emphasize the radical socialist dimension, proletarian involvements and universally accepted texts. Some would even suggest that the Hebrewist particularist was more cultured than the Yiddishist universalist. The Hebrewist came with years of study in Bible and Talmud and a greater tradition of learning than the more proletarian Yiddishist. 15

We are told in the Yomdey Adler of October 24, 1920, of the decision at the Poalei Zion Convention in regard to radical "jergonic" schools.

The debate around the founding of a school system in North America was a very heated one. It was dominated by the two giants of the Labour Zionist Movement at the time, Dr. Chaim Edelsohn and Dr. Nahum Syrkin.
Dr. Khitlevsky was opposed to Hebrew being taught in the school, but was willing to compromise so as not to "hurt the feelings" of the Hebrewists in the movement. He felt that the "bourgeois" schools were going enough for Hebrew, and that it was up to Poalei Zion to stress Yiddish, which was the language of the masses. He minimized the importance of Hebrew in the diaspora by suggesting that when Jews arrived in Erets Israel in due course they could speak Hebrew.

Dr. Nachman Syrkin, on the other hand, was "theoretically an anti-Yiddishist." He agreed with Khitlevsky that, due to circumstances, Yiddish was the chief medium of communication among Jews. He saw the necessity of Yiddish and was, therefore, also willing to compromise for purely pragmatic reasons. He wanted to be understood by the Yiddish-speaking masses. 16

As we know, this battle continued within the National Radical School, which was founded in 1913, and came to a climax in 1915, with the founding of the Jewish People's School. The leader of those who wished an important place for Hebrew was Dr. Yehudah Epstein, then a student at McGill University.

The Yiddish-Hebrew issue in all its ramifications aroused strong feelings even within Labour Zionism. Some members were temporarily suspended from the Poalei Zion because of their extreme Yiddishist stand in the schools. We are even told that feelings were so strong

16 *Yiddish Adler* (Montreal), October 24, 1920.
that they led to fistfights. 17

While strengthening its Yiddish program, the Jewish People’s School became totally committed to the teaching of the Hebrew language. It was not only a subject to be taught, but also an important element of the Jewish People’s School ideological outlook. The Porets School in the early years would justify the teaching of Hebrew as an aid to learning Yiddish, because of the many Hebrew elements in the Yiddish works. The Jewish People’s School taught the Bible in the original and Hebrew literature because of a commitment to the text and its language, too. To them Hebrew was also the language of Eretz Israel being built. 18

Curricular Implications

The 1924 annual report reflects the curricular concerns of the school. There was an outgoing concern with the teaching of Hebrew. The successes in Yiddish came more easily, for many children came from Yiddish-speaking homes. Hebrew, however, was another matter; the curriculum required the teaching of Torah and the Early Prophets in the original. The school was particularly proud that the entire book of Amos was taught. Jewish history, which was not taught systematically in the religious schools, was an important subject in the Jewish People’s School. Modern Yiddish and Hebrew works were continuous fare in addition to the formalized grammar of these languages. The school gave great

17 Novack, in Porets School Record, 1913-19, p. 22.


weight to organization and structure in the curriculum, whether it be in grammar, Bible, or Jewish history, unlike the traditional practice in the religious schools. Social issues were discussed at club activities, conducted in Yiddish; Yiddish and Hebrew songs were taught.19 Yiddish and Hebrew books were distributed from the school library, with a preponderance of Yiddish books, because they were more readily available, we are told, and because Yiddish was easier to read.20 The school had succeeded in creating an institution in which the two languages were taught with a deep sense of commitment to both,—further proof that Poalei Zionists were never anti-Yiddish, but rather pro-Hebrew and pro-Yiddish.

29 Annual Report, Jewish People's School, October to May, 1934.

FURTHER TO THE SCHOOL PROGRAM

First Principles

We are told by Levy (teacher) Chairman, veteran teacher in both schools in turn, of some of the verbalized, but not formally written, principles and teaching program of the National Religious School at its inception:

1. As Nationalists in the progressive, democratic sense of the word, we must give our children an education which will be tied up with our Jewish people, language, literature, history, and, actually, all our people's works.

2. As Radicals, we want to give our children an education which will be consistent with progress, the sciences, free thinking, and the most advanced attitudes of social justice and love for all oppressed peoples and classes.

The founders saw the program based upon these two general articles of faith, of nationalism and socialism. They, therefore, made the following curricular suggestions:

Yiddish to be taught because it is the living language of the majority of the Jewish masses. ...the language of instruction will, therefore, be Yiddish. Hebrew would be considered as an advanced subject in the elementary school. ...it, therefore, should be taught in the older grades as much as necessary, and a supplement to progressive Jewish education, and, as an introduction to old Jewish culture.

2 Tanzer, Max (Montreal), Jubilee Years, 1927.

2 Ibid.
Common Goal

As we have seen from the party conflicts, there were differences as to the language and differences as to socio-political solutions, but nonetheless the founders had a common goal in Jewish education. The following call expresses it: "To retain the Jewish youth for the Jewish people so that they will stand against assimilation and to develop in them a feeling for higher truth and for justice for their own people and for all mankind."

Differences

This common ideological stance was not enough. The Yiddish-Hebrew issue, and all that was implicit in it, led to the bifurcation of the National Radical School. When getting down to the nitty-gritty of highly charged curriculum decisions on language, the abstract common goals were lost sight of.

When Poalei Zion retracted its support from National Radical School, it organized a committee to formulate ideological and practical foundations of the Jewish People's School. The committee consisted of Moche Dietstein, Zelig Wolefsky, Abraham Farnes, and Dr. Yechezkel Kaufman.

In a declaration published in the *Kumador Adler* of July 9, 1925, they clarified the programmatic intentions of the school. They indicated their intention of founding a school in which Hebrew and
Yiddish would have equal status. They expressed concern for and involvement with the traditional Jewish treasures and the principles inherent in the works of the prophets, aggadic literature, Midrash and Chasidic lore. The natural sciences and the history of the oppressed peoples were among the universal subjects to be taught.

Dr. Yehudah Kaufman made quite clear the equal status of Hebrew and Yiddish. "The Jewish People's School belongs to that type of national radical school that excels in a rich Hebraic program. The school requires of its children more Hebraic knowledge. It begins teaching the children Hebrew on the first day of their entry into the school." In Jewish People's School, therefore, Hebrew was taught in grade one, as opposed to Hebrew instruction in the older grades only.

The school took advantage of every opportunity to further the study of Hebrew. An all-day kindergarten, called the Hebrew name, Tiznad, was conducted in Hebrew only, so as to help the Yiddish-speaking children adjust more quickly to further Hebrew studies. In the original National Radical School, there had been those who had fought every inch of Hebrew.

The 1916 Poalei Zion convention adopted a resolution on Hebrew-Yiddish programming in the schools. The resolution illustrates how extremely threatened Yiddishism was by the invades of Hebrew language. Hebrewists finally convinced Yiddishists to replace "may or can" with "should." Yiddishists conceded, after much controversy, that Hebrew

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4 *Yiddisher Adler* (Montreal), July 9, 1917.
5 *The Folk* (Montreal), August 17, 1917.
"should" be taught rather than "may or can" be taught. With this agree-
ment, the two segments could live together within the party. The Jewish
People's School was the Hebrew language proponent, and Paretz School the
strongly Yiddish proponent.

**Yiddish - Hebrew at Paretz School**

By the mid-twenties, the Paretz School adopted a similar atti-
tude to the two languages, with a little greater emphasis on Yiddish
than Jewish People's School. The Paretz School continued to serve more
of the working class elements of the Jewish community, as they remained
downtown and as the Jewish People's School, as we have seen, moved in
the direction of Outremont's middle-class element.

At the time Jacob Zipper, scholar and writer in Hebrew as well
as in Yiddish, arrived in Montreal to take over the helm of the Paretz
School. He eventually asserted that Hebrew was no longer an aid to the
learning of Yiddish, but rather a language which expressed the old
Jewish culture and modern creative life and Zionism as well.

**Paretz School Influence**

The emphasis on Yiddish in Paretz School in the early years
helped attract an element that might have been lost to Jewish life.
Belkin suggests that the National Radical School, which was renamed the
J.L. Paretz School in 1910, was an important influence upon Bundists,
Anarchists, and sundry left-wingers. The school helped break the mores
of assimilation among some of those who saw salvation in the resolution

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6 Belkin, _The Labour Zionist Movement in Canada, 1892-1934_, p.212.
7 Ibid., p. 217.
of universal social problems. It attracted the Jewish workingman who
might have gone further left and become more assimilatist. The Pur-
ports School rather than the Jewish People’s School became the haven for
some left-wingers who were interested in Jewish life.

It should not be overlooked that later Bundism and other left-
wing groups became, through Workers’ Circle, more culturally and nation-
ally committed. They, too, entered the field with their own school,
which later became known as Abraham Reisen School.

Many Faceted Structures

This intensified concern for Jewish education is also reflect-
ed in the programs of the Jewish People’s School. The school was in-
creasing its Hebrew text concerns in catering to older students. The
Hebrew Courses (higher courses), which were made up of students in the
later years of high school, studied thirteen hours per week after their
regular high school hours. Bible studies in the original Hebrew, Say-
ings of the Fathers, and other selections from the Mishnah were taught.
Hebrew poets, such as Malak, and poets and philosophers of the Middle
Ages were studied in the original. Only here, in the very upper grades,
is some mention made of the History of Socialism and of the Labour Move-
ment.

The school began to develop many formats for education in addi-
tion to Hebrew Courses to improve the educational process. Numerous
faculty meetings, well prepared by Principal Shalma Reisen, were often
in-service training opportunities. There were graduate clubs, children’s

6Ibid., p. 316.
clubs, summer programs, adult education classes, concerts and lectures. Students could find reinforcement in informal extra-curricular situations outside the classroom. Their parents could find cultural gratification outside the home and shop. 9

Folk or mass education was aided and abetted by Jewish People's School. Indeed, other institutions were also engaged in adult education, but the school was among the most successful in these various endeavours. In 1931, we hear of formal adult classes:— 1. Hebrew Language and Literature; 2. The History of Yiddish Literature; 3. The History of Social Thought; 4. Psychology; 5. American Literature.

The school broke ground in various directions within the classroom structures as well. They opened a Junior High School (Hittle Shul) in 1922, the Senior High (Shehiteh Gymnasm) in 1924, and the all-day school in 1928. 11 In 1917, an all-day Hebrew gym (kindergarten) was established, which eventually became the source of pupils for the day school. 12

One structure did not last too long. A summer study program, we are told by Mr. Weizman, declined in enrollment because so many of the students would go to the country for the summer holidays. This is also an indication of the changing clientele of the Jewish People's School. Poor, working class people could not have afforded a summer in the country. 13

9 Montreal Evening, June 8, 1931.
10 Annual Report, Jewish People's School, 1922.
12 Annual Report, Jewish People's School, 1924.
13 Ibid., 1930.
The various structures that were attempted and established, both formal or informal, for children, youth, or for adults, were important for the cause of Jewish education in the community at large. These programs were often innovative and unique, and, indeed, led other institutions to introduce them as well. The school was freely recognized by educators as having a significant impact upon Jewish educational institutions in Montreal and on the continent.

The school played a very significant role in the social and cultural development of its students, parents, and adherents, as illustrated by the various structures and programs that were introduced. It became more than just a school, for it fulfilled the function of a synagogue, congregation or community centre, as it concerned itself with the spiritual, cultural, and social needs of its people.

Method and Approach

The teacher's meeting was an important vehicle for enriching the teacher and developing his classroom techniques. Efforts were made to ensure that these techniques not be haphazard and incidental, but rather the result of serious deliberation on the part of teachers and the result of planning. Scientific pedagogical techniques were growing within the walls of this modern educational institution.

Here are some of the goals presented in a lesson plan, which illustrates high pedagogical aspirations. "The topic, 'Home and Family' should enrich the conceptual world of the child with new elements, and should dispel previous misconceptions. The lesson should develop kinesthetic and moral concepts in the child. Children should learn to
exchange ideas and also learn to be patient with the views of others... to develop the child's ability to fantasize."14 How precious, even for a classroom discussion of today.

The Judaic People’s School was also learning from the neighboring schools. They were adhering to some of the approaches of the public school system. Certainly the following information shows little influence from the unstructured shadar: “Thirty-five students were promoted with honour, 220 were promoted, thirty on trial and twenty-four were not promoted.”15

When had the Judaic child in the shadar been subjected to the process of grading? In fact, the old shadar system did not know of text books, subjects, marks, testing, promotions, and formal classes. The Judaic People’s School had pioneered the establishment of organized classrooms, forms of evaluation, and articulated goals.

Some Curricular Goals Realized

The subjects of articles by students of the older grades, chosen by them and approved by their teachers, for the program books of the twenties reflect the curricular interests and concerns of the school:

1. The Exodus from Egypt.
2. What I Think About When I Lie in Bed.
3. A Day in Lafontaine Park.
4. Yeha B’Av (Commemorating the Destruction of the Temple).
5. A Storm.
6. Jerusalem, the Prophet.
8. A Visit to Belmont Park.

14 Ibid., 1920.
15 Ibid., 1926.
10. A Disturbed Picnic.
11. My Trip to the U.S.
12. My Memories of Palestine.
13. The Western Wall.
14. War and Peace.
15. Rabbi Kessel of Kletcho.
17. The Guard in Israel.
18. Chatin Nachman Rischke.
20. Pacism.
22. Sabbetel Yori, the False Messiah.
23. A Few Thoughts About our Youth.
26. Rob Nachman Rischke.
27. Erets Israel Idyll.
28. Attempts at Jewish Farm Settlement.
29. Ten-Week Summer Camp.
30. Vacation in Northern Ontario.
31. The House.
32. Plato as a Social Thinker.
33. About the Jewish Novel.
34. The Disappointment.

In addition, there were translations of English love and nature poetry into Yiddish.

The very titles, and certainly the contents of these articles, help us visualize the nature of the curriculum. It is through these articles of senior students that we see illustrated the accomplishments of the teaching at Jewish People's School. Clearly, a love of the Land of Israel and of Zionism is one theme which is of prime importance to the student. Another is an appreciation of Hebrew language and literature, despite limited linguistic attainments — as compared with Yiddish, which was spoken in the house. A positive attitude to the Jewish tradition and traditional torah, although not much commitment to religious practice is evident. An interest in literature, sociology and the other
humanities with a sense of respect for the sciences is evident. Identification with Jews of the world is apparently important to the student. An interest in social justice and the lot of the workingman, but with no radical or revolutionary intentions to remake the world; no political partisanship is apparent in the articles.

A.B. Yashar, the first full-time professional teacher of Jewish People's School, reflected aptly when he said: "In a word, the school needs to be partisan in spirit, that is and in regard to the ethical and national ideals that should be implanted in the children's hearts. It should, however, be non-partisan with reference to the tactics that each separate party group might undertake to realize its ideals. When they grow up, the children will themselves find the ways and the means and will become active in the political life of society." The non-partisanship of the school is certainly attested to.

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Chapter VII

FURTHER TO ORGANIZATION

Founder - Emancipation

In perusing the various publications of Jewish People's School, as well as the Montreal Jewish press, one becomes impressed with the gigantic presence in the school family of one man in particular. Dr. Yehudah Kaufman had spent some four years in Montreal from 1913 to 1917, and then visited on occasion, as he continued to influence the cultural and ideological life of Montreal Jewry. Dr. Kaufman moved on from Montreal to Philadelphia, New York, and Jerusalem in pursuit of a career in Hebrew scholarship. Dr. Kaufman was neither an administrator nor pedagogue, rather the ideologue, philosopher and prime intellect of Labour Zionism. A man of wit and humor, of personal warmth and humanized learning, it was thus that he exerted his elusive influence.

Under the inspiration of Yehudah Kaufman and with the help of devoted Labour Zionists, the Jewish People's School was founded just two years after the establishment of the National Jewish School. The school was opened on Sunday, August 27, 1917, at 302 Saint Urbain Street, according to the *Emancipator.* Another Yiddish daily, *The Vag* of October 16, 1915, tells us that the school was opened in the beginning

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2. *Emancipator (Montreal), August 27, 1917.*
of October, 1915. This daily informed the public that the Psalai Zion is no longer represented officially in the local National Radical School. Some of the Psalai Zion membership, nevertheless, did continue their association with the National Radical School.

Intra - Structure

When Saloime Wizeman, the later-to-be principal for many decades, arrived in 1917, he found Moishe Dickstein and A.S. Nasser the leading mainstays of the school. There was, as yet, no post of principal at the time, although Sacher, a graduate of the Vilna Teacher's Seminary, was the pedagogic director; Moishe Dickstein was the chief organizer; Dr. Yehudah Kaufman was its spiritual father, and Laiser Kaltzer must have been the administrator. He was called principal from time to time. It seemed that in the early years the Jewish People's School was led by a number of persons sharing responsibilities, with titles of little consequence. Most teachers worked on a voluntary basis, receiving no payment for services. After the first six months, some additional teachers were hired at seven dollars a month. The workload increased as the school became the only one on the continent with daily sessions.

It was difficult to distinguish between professional and lay involvement, for whether one was paid or not, the commitment was intense. Teachers who were paid would gladly have done without payment.

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3 Bakiin, The Labour Zionist Movement in Canada, 1921-30, p. 221.
5 Yiddish Miln (Montreal), August 7, 1910.
if it had been possible. Leroy Chaitman sold eggs as late as the thirties, so that he could continue to serve as a teacher. Those who could not teach were deeply involved in the various sundry activities around the school. The 'school farmin', with a membership of one hundred, met weekly with at least forty in attendance. They would deliberate on ideological and administrative issues. These very 'farmers' members carried the burden of maintenance tasks, such as painting and cleaning. The school was akin to their own homes. 6

**Education and Finance**

The active members of the 'farmers' were also worried about budgeting and finance. The first budget of the school totalled fifty dollars per month, with twenty-five dollars for teacher as the full-time secretary, bill collector and teacher. The school fee was ten cents per week; twenty-five cents per week for three children from the same family. 7

The rapid growth of the school is readily illustrated by the revenue and expenditure reports of the first decades:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Revenue</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1918-1919</td>
<td>7,401.12</td>
<td>7,314.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925-1926</td>
<td>22,371.21</td>
<td>22,483.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927-1928</td>
<td>37,079.47</td>
<td>35,340.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>32,497.65</td>
<td>31,238.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7Ibid., p. 222.
It is quite evident that the school was seriously affected by the Depression of 1929-33. The school had to give up the Notre Dame Branch and a fourth school property. The Depression also affected the school when some of its active leaders had to retire from schoolwork because of their economic circumstances. However, the school was able to overcome economic adversity and continued to grow. It was, indeed, in 1929 that the first successful day school began.

The same economic patterns are evident when looking at financial reports of the larger United Talmud Torahs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Revenue</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>29,910.60</td>
<td>29,160.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>39,547.01</td>
<td>43,613.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>42,629.76</td>
<td>43,331.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>44,457.00</td>
<td>42,494.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Enrollment

The following statistics are of some interest in considering the socio-economic and cultural conditions of the community in the nineteen twenties, and their influence upon enrollment:

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8 Twenty Years, Jewish People's School's Finance, May, 1914 to December, 1935.
Reasons for students leaving the Jewish People's School:

1. Left the city 15
2. Moved too far away 11
3. Working 14
4. Illness 27
5. Religious Reasons 11
6. Do not want to learn 29
7. Must stay home 11
8. Lack of success 14
9. Unpaid fees 3
10. Unknown 4

We may deduce that numbers of Jews were moving to other parts of the continent. Upward mobility is evident, as students moved north and west. In some families, the children had to work or to care for younger ones, as both parents had to work. Sickness may have been more debilitating than in later decades. Lack of interest in Jewish learning or problems of religious identification were evident in the society. Clearly, the school population did not represent a static community.

Proportion of Boys to Girls

Another aspect of enrollment was the proportion of boys to girls. Throughout the years, the Jewish People's School was sensitive to a particular imbalance in the registration.

Traditional Jews had always emphasized the schooling of the boys. They felt that boys needed intense religious training, whereas girls could do with only a bit of Yiddish so as to be able to write letters to the Old Country. Therefore, many would favour the Talmed Yerusha for their sons, with their religious emphasis. The Jewish People's School would get their daughters.

Annual Report, Jewish People's School, 1928.
The school felt offended at the value judgement inherent in this condition. They often rationalized the situation by recalling the important contribution of women to Jewish history.

They, nevertheless, watched anxiously and with relief as the proportion normalized, particularly after the establishment of the day school. In 1920, there were 32% boys and by 1934 there were 42% boys. The proportion of boys at the school grew rather erratically.

One can also see the effects of the Depression on the enrollment in the school.\(^{12}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Students</th>
<th>% of Boys</th>
<th>No. of classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Proportion of Metis Canadians**

The changing nature of the parent body which was enrolling its children in the school was apparent. The proportion of Canadian-born students was growing. School Number II on Beverley Street, in the north-west end, was dominated by Canadian-born. The downtown school

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\(^{12}\) Salome Wexman, "Jewish People's School Book, 1872-1934," p. 25
was becoming less and less Yiddish-speaking. In 1926, 65% of students in Branch One and 90% of students in Branch Two were Canadian-born. The statistics on the country of birth of pupils enrolled in 1926 illustrates the changing sociological nature of the school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Branch One</th>
<th>Branch Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada and U.S.A.</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia and Poland</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roumania</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>404</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Proportion of Parent’s Occupations**

Although the parent body was primarily proletarian, the school was gradually becoming, even in the early years, less of a working class school. Branch Two, which eventually became the central school, had a much larger proportion of small business owners than did Branch One. The statistics foreshadow the impending upward mobility of the Jewish People’s School parent body.

**Occupations of Parent Body, Jewish People’s School, 1926:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Branch One</th>
<th>Branch Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Merchants</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agents and Peddlers</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchants and Manufac-</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-turers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Purves School, on the other hand, attracted a much larger
proportion of working class people. This element identified much more
with working class causes. A poll of 84 graduates of the Porets School
shows where their sympathies lie:

| Socialist  | 17 |
| Leftist    | 17 |
| Poalei Zion | 14 |
| Left Socialists | 6 |
| General Socialists | 6 |
| No Answer  | 24 |

Porets School - Jewish People's School

The Porets School differed from the Jewish People's School,
but there was much that united them. There were a number of convincing
common ideological denominators.

The two school organizations were strongly oriented towards
the Land of Israel. The schools quickly reached positive attitudes to
the two languages. The two schools preached social justice. Both in-
stitutions were secular in outlook, but with an increasingly positive
attitude towards religion. Both schools stressed the cultural and his-
torical heritage of Judaism. Even though they may have differed in
degree, they were close in essence.

Nevertheless, they did differ. The political battles between
them were on the specific doctrinal differences which had arisen in
their beginnings. It almost parallels the Protestant wars of old, when
battles were fought because of slightly differing rituals and doctrines,
in spite of so much that was Christian and Protestant that united them.

14Jacob Ripp, in Porets School Book, 1892-93, p. 69.
Here institutions separated and stayed apart because of a somewhat different emphasis on language. As among the Protestants, however, there was much more that united them ideologically and culturally than separated them.

Through the years, attempts were made by both sides to bring the schools together organizationally and pragmatically.

The minutes of a meeting of the Jewish People's School teachers of 1920 record a joint tag-day by the two schools. Jewish People's School also tried to locate its new branches so as not to compete with Perets School enrollment. In the annual report for the year 1929, we have further evidence of the continuing desire of some of the leaders to bring the two schools together, but unity meetings were unsuccessful.

It seems that one of the chief reasons for the original separation was no longer valid, for, by the mid-twenties, the Perets School had begun to stress more Hebrew. Most other differences, as we have seen, were also of little significance. Personality clashes, both on the professional and lay levels of leadership, may have been one reason for the schools remaining apart.

It took over fifty years for the two institutions to come together again.

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15Minutes, Teachers' Meeting, Jewish People's School, August 12, 1920.


17Annual Report, Jewish People's School, 1929.
Chapter VIII

IN CONCLUSION

French Quebeckers and English Quebeckers were at cross purposes
with each other economically, culturally and historically. They were, in a very real sense, separate communities living apart from each other and coming together only when necessary. Each community set up barriers against each other and thus there was little interaction between the two, and these very same barriers of divergent interests affected the Jews of the community. The Jews could not integrate with either community, which excluded them as well. Thus, Jews nurtured their own historic separateness and aloofness from the rest of the Montreal community.

The Jews reacted by turning inward. The languages of the Jews, their culture, their religious practices, loomed the more important to them in the unfriendly environment. The Jews of Montreal became actively and affectionately involved in the founding and development of a whole series of institutions and organizations, which gratified their cultural needs and sated their social hunger. One must look to the external environment, and also to the Jews' traditional support for culture, to explain the richness of Jewish community experience in Montreal.

An outstanding expression of the high priority assigned to culture was the education of the young. The teaching of Jewish children
in Montreal was of the gravest concern to Jewish community leadership. The Jews chose not to educate their children in the French Catholic system. The Protestants, who had freely accepted the responsibility of educating the Jewish young, found themselves burdened with a task which frustrated their own desire for a strictly confessional system. The Jews, with no neutral system available, became dependent upon the English-speaking educational authorities. These conditions encouraged the development of a relatively strong network of Jewish schools.

There were, too, within the Jewish community, conflicts of interest. The divergent attitudes of the established Jews and the arriving immigrants is of some consequence. The 'downtowners' treasured Yiddish, whereas the 'uptowners' had little regard for it. The one sought democratization and participation, and the other stood for benevolent control and domination. The 'uptowner' was often the exploiting boss, and the immigrant the exploited. The one, conservative; the other progressive, often socialist. The 'downtowners' was ready for an independent separate school panel, whereas the 'uptowners' insisted upon integration within the Anglo-Saxon establishment. The Eastern European immigrants in conflict with their established brothers moved, therefore, intensively towards the development of numerous institutions which would express their particular needs.

The Jewish People's School is but one example of the evolution of an immigrant institution. The early proletarian radicalism turned to progressive, social and humanistic values, as reflected in the past history and works of the Jews. Zionism, and all that was programmatically inherent in it, was of prime importance to the school.
This programmatic involvement with the Zionist idea and reality did not express itself through political affiliation with Poalei Zion, even though much of the early leadership was involved in both. There was cooperation, some common goals, some joint activities, but two distinctly separate entities. Jewish People's School was never really a socialist school.

The school plotted an independent course on a number of levels. The establishment of the school was also a reaction to the conditions existing in traditional educational life. The new institution reacted to what was old-fashioned in the Hebrew school by introducing modern pedagogical techniques. It reacted to lack of organization, planning, and foresight by structuring, organizing, and conceptualizing on matters concerning Jewish education for young and old. The school responded to the religious character of the traditional schools by developing a more secular Jewish educational environment.

The school was not as secular and was more traditional than the religious would credit them. There was evident a sensitivity to the religious, to the traditional texts, to religious Jewish lore and literature. Although not seeking to insulate ritual observance, the school grappled with the religious nature of the Jew in its many facets. The educators and supporters groped for meaning within Judaism, while very much attuned to the cultural and scientific endeavor of the time.

This groping and searching led the school to take positions in Jewish life. The tendency was often to take an ideologically contrari
position on the issues of the day. The school was progressive and not radically socialist. It was Hiddushist-Neo-Hasidist, rather than polarized towards one or the other language. It was neither atheistic nor orthodox, but rather challengingly sympathetic to the tradition. The school was neither singularly particularist nor universalist, but rather integrative of general and Jewish culture. The school observed the golden mean as it moved along the path of gold.
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