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CONSTRUCTING KNOWLEDGE, PURPOSE, AND ORGANIZATION INSIDE
ONTARIO'S ROYAL COMMISSION ON LEARNING (1993-1995)

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education
The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of
The University of Toronto

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ABSTRACT


In this dissertation I focus on Ontario's Royal Commission on Learning (RCOL), established on May 4, 1993 as an initiative of the New Democratic Party government. RCOL was mandated to study and make recommendations for a range of topics pertinent to publicly-funded education, for Kindergarten to OAC, including accountability, governance, program, and vision. With the release of its report to the Minister of Education and Training in January 1995, RCOL was "decommissioned."

I examine and analyze this policy-oriented royal commission from three complementary perspectives, the construction of 1) knowledge, 2) multiple purposes, and 3) organization. Constructivist theory is used to examine how RCOLers actively built their individual and collective knowledge bases, developed the Commission to serve several public purposes, and how they established and maintained an instrument especially devised for these ends. A related purpose of this study is to compare the experience of policy-oriented commissions with that of RCOL. The main contribution of this dissertation is that it is the first, in-depth analysis of a policy-oriented royal commission that utilizes a multiple-perspectives conceptual approach with participant observation as the main research instrument. Document analysis and interviews are the other important means of gathering data for this qualitative case study.

I broadly define the elements of knowledge construction to include political, social, economic,
and policy contexts, as well as the mandate, the orientation period, public consultation, internal deliberations, and the writing process. The deliberation of public values is also part of knowledge construction. The discussion of multiple purposes addresses a number of important functions of this Commission, such as policy advice, evaluation, research, consensus-making, political instrument, and what I term the "cathartic bully-pulpit" function, the release of stakeholder tension and leading the debate on educational reform. The organizational perspective involves elements of the task environment, the nature of the tasks, coordinating mechanisms, roles, leadership, power, culture, and organizational type.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The genesis and evolution of this dissertation over four years owe much to the intellectual and moral support provided by my thesis supervisor at OISE, Dr. Richard Townsend. Dr. Edward Hickcox was also a great motivator and a wise counsel during my studies at the Institute. Drs. Townsend, Hickcox, and Stacy Churchill were stalwart members of my dissertation committee, and Churchill also served as the internal appraiser. In addition to their insightful comments, this study has been enriched by other individuals on the oral examination committee: Dr. Robin Farquhar, of Carleton University, the external examiner; Dr. Ronald Manzer of the University of Toronto’s Political Science Department; and OISE’s Dr. Steven Lawton who also gave me unstinting encouragement throughout my studies at OISE. A special thanks goes to Simon Fraser University’s Professor Emeritus Norman Robinson for his mentorship over the years. Financial support for this research was generously provided by the Ontario Government Scholarship Program from 1993 to 1996.

This study would not have been possible without the co-operation of the former co-chairs, commissioners, and researchers of the Royal Commission on Learning. I have tried to do justice to their diverse and rich viewpoints in my analysis.

My deepest thanks also go to an old friend, Liz Elliott, who helped me solve the mysteries of word processing and formatting such a large document, and to Dr. Dave Royal, who as a fellow student showed me that closure could be brought to the dissertation process and who was a kind and generous source of enthusiasm for my work. I wish also to thank my wife, Marian, who because of my role as a student had to endure many more burdens than I had the right to expect.

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, George and Elizabeth, who encouraged and supported me through every step of this journey. Without their love and guidance I could not have completed this study.
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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION TO THIS STUDY

In this dissertation I focus on Ontario's Royal Commission on Learning (RCOL). The Commission was established on May 4, 1993 by an Order-In-Council under section two of the Public Inquiries Act, R.S.O., 1990, as an initiative of the New Democratic Party government led by Premier Bob Rae. Five individuals were appointed as commissioners: Co-chairs: Monique Bégin, a former federal Minister of Health and Welfare and presently Dean of Health Sciences at the University of Ottawa; and Gerry Caplan, a public policy analyst and public affairs commentator; and as commissioners: Msgr. Dennis Murphy from North Bay, retiring director of the Toronto-based Institute for Catholic Education; Manisha Bharti, a Grade 12 honours student from Cornwall and the first student to serve on a royal commission in Ontario; and Avis Glaze, a public school superintendent from North York. Dr. Roberta Bondar, Canada's first woman astronaut in space, was also appointed as a special adviser to the Commission. A small support structure was created to assist the commissioners in their inquiries, for research, logistics, communications, outreach, and clerical work. The Royal Commission was mandated to submit its final report and recommendations by December 31, 1994.

On that day in May, the newly-appointed Minister of Education and Training, Dave Cooke, spoke of his expectations for RCOL, as he called for stakeholder support and participation:

The challenge for the Commission is to take the public's concerns and expectations and translate them into a concrete plan for the future of our education system and programs. That is not an easy task, but it is crucial to improving confidence in the system, the improvement of our economy, and the personal growth and well being of every citizen of our province. That is why we are asking for the support of the general public and our partners. Participation in this process is critical to its success (News Release, 1993, p.2).

The mandate of the Commission, developed in consultation with a working group of education representatives, addressed a range of topics. In brief terms, the Commission was mandated to identify problems and seek solutions in four key areas:

1. Accountability: How can we ensure that our school system is accountable to the public? What are the education standards, who should set them, and how do we evaluate the progress of students against those standards?
2. Governance: What are the most effective and efficient ways to organize the education system? What are the roles and responsibilities of parents, teachers, trustees, and other education partners?

3. Program: What knowledge and skills do our young people need to participate successfully in a technological society? How should we develop, organize, and deliver curriculum?

4. Vision: What is our shared vision for the education of Ontario's students? What values and principles should guide our education systems?

The Order-In-Council stipulated that two questions were not to be addressed by RCOL: funding/finance issues and the rights guaranteed by the Constitution Act, 1982 concerning Roman Catholic separate schools and francophone schooling. RCOL's inquiry was to take place in the context of a number of government initiatives already under way: provincial testing of Grade 9 students, destreaming, the circulation of the working document for the Common Curriculum (Grades 1 to 9), the increased participation of parents in education, and further steps in French-language education.

The last comprehensive review of Ontario's education system was the Hall-Dennis Committee that released its report in 1968. Since then a spate of specialized reports/task forces/commissions addressed a number of issues: educational finance, dropouts, independent schools, and French-language education.

This study is an in-depth look at a policy-oriented royal commission from three perspectives, the construction of 1) knowledge, 2) multiple purposes, and 3) organization. These three constructions were chosen because, from the vantage point of my role as participant observer within the Commission, they were the main challenges that RCOLers (by whom I specifically mean commissioners and researchers) had to tackle in the short history of the Commission. Other organizations may pursue these same tasks, but few start with as clean a slate, and very few have to accomplish their tasks in such a relatively short time. RCOL began in May 1993 as five individuals largely unknown to one another, brought together to inquire about the state of publicly-funded education in Ontario, a sprawling and complex system the understanding of which was laced with uncertainty and ambiguity. RCOL folded its tent in January 1995, whittled to four commissioners (Bharti was studying at Harvard), four researchers, and half a dozen support staff. RCOLers began the process with no bureaucratic memory and no established routines, nor did the flurry of tasks and events before them allow the creation of a stable organizational repertoire to fulfil its mandate. Instead, RCOLers were forced to innovate, improvise, and continuously construct on three fronts simultaneously.
A review of commission-related literature led me to believe that other commissions shared some of these characteristics, and a related purpose of this study is to compare the experience of other commissions with that of RCOL. This comparison has distinct limitations, as no one study has looked at these three perspectives in depth and in tandem. A particular short-coming of the literature is the lack of an extended treatment of knowledge construction, the main focus of this dissertation. Many scholarly treatments are either tightly-focussed scholarly articles written by individuals who, like myself, had worked inside commissions, or dissertations written from the vantage point of outsiders. The main contribution of this study is that it is the first in-depth examination of a policy-oriented royal commission that utilizes both a multiple-perspectives conceptual approach with participant observation as a main research instrument. The current controversy about the efficacy of commissions may suggest to some that this particular public instrument may be an endangered species in "post-modern" Canada. But royal commissions of the judicial or policy-oriented variety will probably endure because no real alternatives have been conceived to replace their unique role in unearthing super-nonroutine policy problems or in investigating egregious acts of injustice. The position taken here is that we need to learn more about such public instruments: how they operate, what their problems are and how their members try to surmount them, and how members come to the conclusions that they do. This dissertation is a contribution to the study of policy-oriented royal commissions, specifically Ontario's Royal Commission on Learning, how its members constructed the content of the Report, what multiple purposes the Commission served, and how they organized themselves for the accomplishment of these tasks. Along the way, this study necessarily is also concerned with the substance of the educational issues that RCOL tackled and how they were dealt with internally, specifically on governance, the purposes of public education, secondary school issues, and public choice.

The stimulus to employ a "multiple-perspectives approach" comes from Malen and Knapp (1994). Such an approach in policy analysis has its origins in Graham Allison's seminal Essence of Decision (1971), and according to Malen and Knapp (p. 2) has three potential advantages in analyzing policy:

First, [the multiple perspectives approach] recognizes the complexity of policy events and acknowledges the absence of an over-arching or "grand theory"...of policymaking activity. Given both the messiness of the terrain and the state of the art, systematic efforts to articulate, apply and refine various mental maps may be a necessary, if not altogether satisfactory way to examine the phenomena of interest, "test" the relatively rugged conceptual frameworks and derive more elegant theories...
Second, it protects against premature closure and distorted interpretation. If there are many ways of examining and alternative ways of interpreting events, that recognition can function as an ever-present reminder of the need to search for rival hypotheses and a readily-available "check" on an analyst's inclination to over-simplify events...

Third, the systematic application of multiple perspectives to events may generate insights regarding what is occurring and why as well as how one might influence events, should one choose to do so...

The multiple-perspectives approach is applied in this dissertation less in the spirit of presenting three different frameworks and is more in line with the idea of presenting three complementary frameworks, that taken together, offer a composite picture of RCOL. As a commission with a broad mandate, an ill-structured work domain, relatively limited resources, and a rapidly closing window of time, RCOL was forced to pursue several core tasks at once in a constructivist sense.

Prestine (1995, pp. 272-273) helps us to understand how the three perspectives chosen for this dissertation are related in constructivist theory:

A key tenet of...constructivist theory is that people learn by actively constructing knowledge, weighing new information against their previous understanding, thinking about and working through discrepancies (on their own and with others), and coming to a new understanding, which implies an emphasis on comprehensive understanding involving the whole person rather than "receiving" a body of factual knowledge about the world...In harmony with other cognitive learning theories, the constructivist perspective posits that knowledge is situated, a product of both context and activity. Knowledge is "situated in activity" and used within "specific contexts and cultures"...The important point is that "situatedness" means that knowledge, and by extension, the knowledge base, are not context-free concepts and, in fact, have no meaning except within a given context and culture.

Within RCOL, therefore, knowledge construction was both an individual and collective act that can only be properly understood as this construction evolved over the process; various purposes or functions were fashioned by RCOLers in ways they deemed appropriate for their particular circumstances; and the particular features of their organization also bore the imprint of individual will and group interaction and this organization, in turn, constrained and catalyzed individual and collective behaviour. Beginning with a relatively clean slate in May 1993, RCOLers constructed on three fronts simultaneously because their unique circumstances demanded it.

Webster's (1991) is of use in understanding these concepts and their relationships:
[Information is partly defined] as: 1. knowledge communicated or received concerning a particular fact or circumstance; news. 2. knowledge gained through study, communication, research, instruction, etc; data; facts (p. 690).

[Knowledge is partly defined as]: 1. acquaintance with facts, truths, or principles; general erudition. 2. familiarity or conversance, as by study or experience: a knowledge of human nature. 3. the fact or state of knowing; clear and certain mental apprehension; 4. awareness, as a fact of circumstance. 5. something that is known or may be known; information. 6. the body or facts accumulated in the course of time. 7. the sum of what is known (p. 750).

[Wisdom is defined as]: "the quality or state of being wise; sagacity, discernment, or insight. 2. scholarly knowledge or learning. 3. wise sayings or teachings; precepts. 4. a wise act or saying (p. 1529).

From Webster's, the key aspect about information, for our purposes, is the understanding of it being a type of knowledge gained through study, communication, and research, mainly connected to data and facts. As Peters and Barker (1993) noted, fact, opinion, and values in public policy are not easily separated. But the point I make here is that information, in the knowledge construction framework, refers to the gathering of data and facts about what is known or said to be known about issues germane to RCOL's purview. Much of the energy of RCOLers was spent collecting, listening to, and analyzing information from a variety of sources. Knowledge, as the dictionary notes, incorporates the notion of facts into the realm of truths, principles, and values; much of what was heard in the hearings and, indeed, the bedrock of public education, are steeped in the norms and values that various folk hold dear or hotly contest, and RCOLers also had distinct values that they wanted to affirm, modify, or reject. Some of this knowledge may be characterized as "clear, and certain mental apprehension," and firmly espoused as absolutes; some of it may be defined by a stance, not offered in this dictionary, that has "post-modernist" sensibilities: provisional, conditional, and shifting. Value-laden knowledge of both types was part and parcel of the terrain on which the Commission laboured. The very act of establishing a policy-related commission to study vexing issues may be interpreted as invocation of the idea of wisdom, whereby a few public intellectuals are chosen and specially empowered in law to identify public problems and to recommend remediation for them. Whether RCOL members' policy advice proves to be wise counsel is a question to be answered by politicians, stakeholders, policy implementors, educators at all levels of the system, members of the media and of academe. Wisdom, however, is perhaps best judged long after the dust of public debate has settled, to be
pondered by a future generation.

Pristine's (1995) comments about the construction of a knowledge base for educational administration sheds some light on the cognitive tasks faced by RCOLers:

One of the problems encountered in any discussion of knowledge or knowledge base is that both terms refer to something external as well as to something internal. On the one hand, the terms knowledge base connote an identifiable, durable intellectual framework of a domain, inclusive of theories, abstractions, and systems of belief that transcend individuals and interpretations, and which exist prior to them, and, to a large extent, beyond their control. This functionalist conception is the one used most frequently in the debates swirling around the establishment of a knowledge base for educational administration. On the other hand, knowledge and a knowledge base can be conceptualized as internalized phenomena that are experienced, understood, and constructed in different ways by different individuals. This constructivist understanding is crucial, in that it posits that knowledge can only be understood by the individual as it is constructed by the mind. In this view, knowledge is not so much an external object for possession as it is a web of connections actively and continually reconstructed by the individual to form a fabric of internalized meaning (pp. 278-279.)

This dissertation employs both conceptions of knowledge base, functionalist and constructivist. In the external sense, a key knowledge-building activity within RCOL was the assembly of theories, abstractions, and more concrete musings about public education in general and the Ontario context in particular. This activity could be classified as the assembly of state-of-the-art knowledge from a wide variety of domains. In an internal sense, through internal deliberations and the writing process, RCOLers were also engaged in the creation of an internal knowledge base in the constructivist sense, a process that is driven by interpretation, debate, judgment, and the search for meaning, a complex set of activities that is both individual and collective.

In Chapter 2, I identify and describe the literature on policy-oriented commissions from three different perspectives: knowledge construction, multiple purposes, and organizational structure, and provide some insights from the literature on American and Canadian education commissions. In Chapter 3 I address commission composition, contexts, and the mandate. In Chapter 4 I study RCOL's orientation period, public hearings, schools visits, media, and outreach. In Chapter 5 I examine internal deliberations and the writing process. In Chapter 6 I tackle the issue of public values and four internal, value-laden debates. In Chapter 7, I analyze the multiple purposes that RCOL served. In Chapter 8, I develop the concept of RCOL as an organizational structure. In Chapter 9 I sum up the conclusions of the study and
make some recommendations for further study. In Chapter 9 I also probe the notion of constructivism in
greater detail and assess the usefulness of this concept for the purposes of this study.

Chapters 3 to 9 inclusive address nine research questions:

1) What is the description of important contextual factors surrounding RCOL and what impact do they
have on internal deliberations?
2) How would the major processes in knowledge construction be described?
3) What is the substance of critical aspects of this knowledge construction?
4) What public purposes did RCOL serve?
5) How would RCOL be described as an organization?
6) How can the descriptive data on the findings be explained on an analytical and a conceptual level?
7) How does RCOL compare with other commissions from the vantage point of the three perspectives?
8) What patterns emerge from this analysis?
9) What scholarly analysis did the Report attract, and how do the findings and analysis in this dissertation
present some explanations for questions posed by academe?

This study is delimited by a number of factors. In the context of a time frame, the main focus of
this study is from the inception of RCOL in May 1993 to its decommissioning in January 1995. RCOL was
the product of government will and the historical evolution of educational politics in Ontario, and some
reference to events outside this time frame is necessary to provide some context for the evolution of
RCOL. For example, I include some events related to policy enactments of the Cooke and Snobelen
ministries, from 1995 to 1997, because they are directly related to the question of the impact of RCOL's
policy advice function. The primary focus of this dissertation is those members whom I term "RCOLers"
and their interactions in the major streams of RCOL processes. This term describes the two co-chairs, five
commissioners, one executive director, and eight researchers, and does not include the small support team,
although I do introduce the latter and explain their duties. The only non-RCOLer whose views were
solicited and used for this study is the former Minister of Education and Training, Dave Cooke, because
his viewpoint was critical in establishing the details of RCOL's genesis, and in assessing how his Ministry
perceived RCOL's Report and its relationship to subsequent policy making. Although the policy
community that surrounded RCOL is populated by a wide range of stakeholders and interest groups, I did
not choose to interview any of their representatives.
Anonymity was requested by MET-seconded researchers because of two related reasons. As civil servants, they ascribed to a traditional reticence to make their views publicly known. I also asked them to describe their relationships to the executive director who, once the RCOL process folded, would be in a direct supervisory position over some of them. Under these circumstances, I thought it prudent to honour their request. Because I granted this request for some researchers, I felt that all researchers should benefit from anonymity, as allowing this status to one group and not to another would probably compromise the entire principle. For the commissioners and the executive director who signed the letter of transmittal that formally released the Report to the government, a copy of which is part of the front matter of every copy, I considered them to be public figures who did not need the guarantee of anonymity, and no objections were posed by any of them to my inclination.

There are also a number of limitations that were placed on this study. This dissertation makes use of documentary analysis, interviews, and participant observation. When one includes presentation briefs in the documentary mix, the total numbers are in the upper five figures. This volume forced me to be selective as to which documents had greater import than others, and with selectivity a certain degree of subjectivism inherently creeps into deciding what is wheat and what is chaff. While most RCOLers were candid and detailed in their interviews, they were responding in a semi-structured format to questions that I constructed, and so I shaped to some extent what they had to say. Interviews also introduce a high degree of subjectivity, as each individual's experience about what happened, and how she or he felt about events, is not the same. (See Appendix A for the list of research questions).

The composite picture that I constructed from these data cannot do full justice to the diversity of views that were presented to me. Interviewees may have also chosen not to discuss certain aspects of their experience within RCOL. Working at close quarters in rather intimate, conflictive circumstances produced a number of bruised egos within RCOL, and while interviews capture some of this, some interviewees were clearly hesitant to fully disclose their "take" on the proceedings. Events happened very quickly within RCOL once the hearings process began, and remembering key events and how they unfolded was sometimes difficult for interviewees.

METHODOLOGY

Through the agency of a researcher I knew from OISE, the idea of having a student study the inner
workings was discussed by commissioners in June and July 1993. Although some commissioners, I'm told, expressed reservations about granting any student access on the grounds that their internal deliberations should be kept private, the co-chairs readily accepted the idea and evidently this tipped the scales in my favour. I was then asked to provide a short description of my proposed study. Although the focus of my study broadened over time, all the commissioners and researchers were aware of my presence as an observer from the beginning. One might ask: Did my presence affect the behaviour of RCOLers in a way that would change outcomes differently? On one level, it is now an established adage that the presence of an observer in any setting changes in some small or large way what goes on in that setting. But the larger issue here is that I do not feel that my presence altered much in the way of the process or outcomes. The group dynamics and the insider/outsider rift that I later describe in Chapters 3 and 4 were well established by the time I entered RCOL as a full-time observer in September 1993, as I began to have daily contact with all its members. This can be validated by cross-checking the interview data that covered the entire period of RCOL's mandate. Secondly, researcher descriptions in either interviews and/or personal communications where I was not present were consistent with the pattern of coalitions, conflicts, and animosities that I observed in meetings where I was personally present. In other words, my presence in or out of meetings did not perceptibly alter patterns of RCOLer behaviour.

I gained access to RCOL in stages: first, upon signing on as a student in July 1993, I soon was writing two small pieces on educational topics for staff at the request of another researcher. These two papers were written that summer after having met a total of three researchers and no commissioners, the latter not due back from holidays/other commitments until September. When the hearings ensued, I attended the majority of them as an observer and as a volunteer worker for RCOL, even on occasion driving a van chock-a-block with commissioners, staff, and RCOL paraphernalia. When the internal deliberations period commenced, I proceeded to perform a number of tasks for which I was recompensed, including analyzing stakeholder briefs for internal perusal. I took part in deliberations as a participant and scholar, selected presenter quotes for inclusion in the Report, and edited sections of the Report. Save for the period from May and June 1993, then, this observer was participating in every major phase and task of RCOL's operation, both as a scholar and as a worker, in the relatively intimate midst of presenters, experts, commissioners, researchers, and support staff.

My role as participant observer for more than a year and a half gave me a privileged look inside
RCOL, a role that assumed greater depth because fellow RCOLers allowed me greater degrees of access within the organization, although some were more obliging than others. The flip side is that participant observation has limitations. The first of these is that as one becomes part of the organization, one can easily lose one's perspective as a researcher. In a politicized instrument, such as RCOL, it was difficult not to join sides and not to engage in the partisanship that a bias-defined culture easily induces. As a former teacher and principal, I came to RCOL with distinct perspectives, and much baggage in the way of values and intellectual and lived ideologies. At times, I found it very difficult not to mount my private soap box, and on occasion I found myself doing precisely that. In meetings I was often asked my opinion on issues, and I found it difficult not to want an even greater say. To temper this inclination was a necessity, for it was clear to me if I were seen to play too large an advocacy role, my degree of access to proceedings would be sharply curtailed. One cannot throw oil on the fire and expect at the same time to be treated with respect as the in-house anthropologist, as Caplan described me on occasion. The work that I engaged in was also taxing, at times keeping me from meetings and attending to my scholarly researcher's role. Refocusing my priorities was not always easily accomplished. Sometimes, frankly, I felt lost, cast adrift on a sea of words, ideas, emotions, and behaviours. Such a highly-adhocratic organization as RCOL offered little in the way of personal security and stability, and at times I felt overwhelmed, swamped by the rush of events. My enduring consolation was that my researcher-colleagues offered me some space in their life-raft, determined as they were to stay afloat by hook or by crook: I was buoyed by their grit and compassion.

Participant observation is a compound noun and a balance of its elements requires constant vigilance. I was a subjective actor within RCOL but the needs of scholarship required some counterbalance, and thus many of the findings in this dissertation rely heavily upon interviews with commissioners and researchers, in a way that some readers might think profligate. Some students prefer to reduce quotes from interviews to pithy paraphrasing or to abridge them and place them in endnotes or appendices. I resisted this treatment of quotes for three basic reasons. The first of these stems from the need to ground my observations in the rich and varied perspectives of the players themselves. RCOLers had a story to tell, and this dissertation is largely their story, not mine. In comparison with many of these players, my role was relatively insignificant, a bit part played by a character actor. What the butler saw peeping through the keyhole may have a distinct flavour and value of its own, but the plot of the play
within RCOL was carried forward by the action and dialogue of the actors behind the door. Their words, descriptions, and anxieties were also a main methodological antidote to the obvious temptation to skew the drama before me through my own subjective predisposition. The other reason why the data from interviews featured so prominently in this dissertation stems from a habit of mine acquired as a student of history and political science at the University of Toronto, beginning thirty years ago. Simply put, I found that I was most interested in the words spoken directly by various figures over time, and recorded for posterity through scholarship. Words connected me directly to the person and the spirit of the times in a much more direct way than the analysis and commentary of the scholars that otherwise monopolized the text. What the words offered was an authenticity that even an author who was clearly captive of a particular trend in scholarship could not obscure.

Document analysis was also an important part of this dissertation, in pegging down the flow of events, in ascertaining how others recalled the agendas of meetings, in noting what presenters said in public hearings, and in grasping how the various drafts of the Report evolved over time. Document analysis helped me to establish the structure and nuance of organizational memory that was too often lost in the blur of events and tasks undertaken by RCOLers. Within a fast-paced organization such as RCOL, much in the way of documentation is consigned to the storage cabinet or shredded as a new task evolves, or as a new draft emerges from the pipeline. An important task of scholarship is to secure the documents that form an important record of events and to share their evidence with like-minded individuals.

This is a qualitative, descriptive case study, combining three different types of social science case categories, including:

1. **Historical case studies of organizations.** These studies trace the development of an organization over time.

2. **Observational case studies.** These studies usually focus on an organization [or] some part of an organization. A group of individuals who interact over a period of time is usually the focus of the study. Such studies are concerned with ongoing groups and generally use participant observation as the major data-collecting tool.

3. **Situational analysis.** In this form of case study, a particular event is studied from the viewpoint of all the major participants. (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 403)

RCOL was an organization with a short but very distinct history, populated by commissioners and researchers working in close quarters for almost two years and who also have a story to tell. This thesis
is a description and explanation of those stories.

The general approach in method for this study is rooted in ethnography, a method with its origin in anthropology, the former here defined as:

[A]n in-depth analytical description of an intact cultural scene. Anthropologists have usually used the participant observation method...in order to obtain the insider's viewpoint...The observer uses continuous observation, trying to record everything that occurs in the setting being studied. (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 387)

This study highlights the inner workings of RCOL and its members as a cultural scene, as recollected by substantially more than the viewpoint of a single participant observer, rather being the product of the viewpoints of the five commissioners, one executive director, and eight researchers, and the participant observer. The task of this thesis, then, is to add to this mix of values, beliefs, behaviours, memory, and tasks my own components of culture, and filter them through the primary question of "What does it all mean?" (Merriam, 1988, p. 16). I tried simultaneously to be both an insider and an outsider in this situation, a participant and an observer, a friend and a stranger.

Whether called qualitative, naturalistic, or ethnographic (some authors would differentiate these terms), these three words describe an approach to scholarly inquiry that exhibits ten salient characteristics: research involves holistic inquiry carried out in a natural setting; humans are the primary data-gathering instrument; emphasis is put on qualitative methods; sampling is purposive rather than random; analysis is inducted; grounded theory is developed; design emerges as the research progresses; subject plays a role in interpreting; intuitive insights are used; and emphasis is placed on social processes (Borg & Gall, 1989, pp. 385-387).

Below I describe in a little more detail these ten features of this type of inquiry (in some cases conflating them) and explain to what degree my methodology was faithful to them, and I examine as well other method-related questions as well.

The emphasis on field research in this form of inquiry is "studying the whole setting in which the inquiry takes place...aimed at an understanding of the social, cultural, and historical setting in which the investigation occurs" (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 385). This approach is described by a high degree of respect for context, not only observing the elements of the organization's external and internal environments but also probing their reciprocal impacts on the people who form, develop, and defend that organization.

The setting for this thesis is Ontario's Royal Commission on Learning, from May 1993 to January
1995. RCOL's commissioners, researchers, and support staff went where their work took them: to over thirty different venues during the public hearings in the fall and winter of 1993, to schools and community centres, and even to shopping malls all over the province. The orientation period from May to August 1993, and the internal deliberation and writing phases that continued after the hearings until the delivery of the Report, mainly took place at RCOL headquarters on the thirteenth floor of 101 Bloor Street West in Toronto.

Studying the natural setting requires continuous observation for substantial periods of time (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 385). For example, in the findings I discuss values and insider/outsider biases at work within RCOL. Uncovering values and biases requires more than an interview or two; it is an endeavour that demands constant attention and intuition on the part of the observer.

If the natural setting is the optimum choice for the study, then paying close attention to contextual influences logically follows in this form of inquiry. For example, if the behaviour of organizational members is the topic of study, the context that gives rise to behaviour (such as value orientations and biases) is also examined. Context can have different meanings tied to the notion of environment. One definition of context by Smith and Glass (1987, p. 253) speaks of "the influence of the physical, social, and psychological environment" on the behaviour and perceptions of the persons involved, usually referring to the internal environment of the setting. I am mindful of the need to explain some of the external contextual impacts and relationships, and some of the more salient internal contextual elements.

Borg and Gall (1989, p. 385) assert that the main rationale for preferring the human observer is that:

[N]o nonhuman instrument is sufficiently flexible to adapt to the complex situation as it evolves and to identify and take into account biases that result from the interactions and value differences between the "instrument" and the "subject."

One could add to the list of matters to take into account biases and values in their own right and what impacts they have on the organization, as discussed above. For the participant observer, the organization is simultaneously both an external context (something studied) and an internal context (something in which he/she participates as a member). Making an "objective" assessment in this scenario is thus highly problematic, as the "objective" observer is also a subjective actor and active player. This observer needed
therefore to include other viewpoints than his own in this study in order to show that other members' perceptions have been accorded a fair hearing. The extensive quotes from five commissioners and eight researchers in this thesis, besides providing grist for the analytical mill, act as a concrete counter-balance to the formation of a purely subjective viewpoint of one author or a small group of key informants.

Observing at RCOL meant primarily two things. First, I observed as many hearings and internal meetings as possible, furiously scribbling notes of dialogue, debate, and behaviour. Observing also meant listening to what was not said in meetings, and what was discussed in hallways, and offices, and over coffee.

Qualitative data-gathering methods for a study of this nature are "preferred because they are considered more amenable to the diversity of 'multiple realities' one finds in a complex field situation" (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 385). Such methods for this thesis include participant observation and elite interviewing, as well as document analysis.

The degree of participant observation, as noted above, evolved over time, as did the quality of direct on-site observation. Access to the inner workings of RCOL involved a number of levels of penetration, some more open than others. My first real contact with more than two RCOLers at one time began with the public hearings in the fall of 1993, and through various volunteer tasks, I managed not only to view many of the hearings and record significant details, but also to interact with the RCOLers during a fairly intimate and stressful three months. Access to the internal deliberations was facilitated personally through the agency of the co-chairs, and I attended many of the sessions at 101 Bloor Street West throughout 1994. Later in this process, threatened or real friction among commissioners would on occasion prompt the (second) executive director to ask me not to attend a session. The sense of what transpired at these missed meetings would most often in any case be relayed to me by one or another researcher who was fortunate enough to be included: it is difficult to keep secrets in such a small organization. My exit from RCOL was on the occasion of my last participatory act: driving the co-chairs, the communications consultant, and a researcher around Toronto for media interviews in the wake of the release of the Report in late January 1995.

Upon my exit, I began to try to make sense of all my field notes, and I worked on delineating some initial categories and conceptualizations. While I knew by this juncture that my thesis needed to take into account the "whole setting," the specific approach or focus still lay before me. I designed a
semi-structured interview schedule that asked questions about the Commission from start to finish. All interviewees answered an evolving core set of these questions. Some process-related questions were dropped after a saturation point was reached, allowing for more extensive probing of issues that needed further clarification. The more general saturation point in six months of interviewing was reached in two stages: when the last commissioner/researcher was interviewed in September 1995 and when former Minister Cooke was interviewed a year later. Each interviewee contributed unique insights, unknown-to-me bits of information, and nuances, that helped consolidate my understanding of RCOL.

This dissertation also involved a constant stream of document analysis, some of which was undertaken as a participant, such as the analysis of stakeholder presentations or the editing of various drafts of the Report, and some was done more in the observer stance. The latter documentation included media clippings provided to the Commission on a weekly basis, the perusal of inter-office memos and policy-related documents and articles that made the rounds, and more importantly, having access to the voluminous E-mail traffic among RCOL members and E-mail from the Ministry of Education and Training. Notable documents or excerpts from them, close to a hundred presenter briefs, summaries of hearings, as well as various drafts of the Report all added up to a half-dozen or so boxes that I took with me upon my exit. Documentation of this type proved an invaluable resource when added to my journal notes, as the hectic pace within RCOL and that organization's short life combined to blur distinctions of time, place, and substance: documentation was often consulted to establish time lines and added detail for this thesis.

Helping to unravel the welter of detail and ideas, and to boost confidence in research findings, is the function of triangulation of methodology that can be achieved "by collecting essentially the same data from different samples, at different times, and in different places" (Borg and Gall, p. 393). Participant observation, interviews, and document analysis formed the three sides of the triangle for this thesis.

Purposive sampling is used in qualitative inquiry to get at the full range of subjects to be studied (Borg & Gall, 1989, p.386). I chose to interview all the commissioners and researchers, as well as Minister Cooke who was there at the beginning and the end, because I wanted to include a wide range of viewpoints of all major players in the process. Including the Minister, this set includes a total of fifteen individuals, a sample that is manageable for a two- to three-hour interview format per individual. No one
person or small group of individuals so dominated the process of RCOL to allow me to assume that its viewpoints could represent the collected wisdom of all its members. Purposive sampling did play a large part in documentation analysis, particularly in the selection of presenters’ written briefs to be analyzed. With the total count of briefs of at least three thousand, a large measure of discretion had to be employed to ensure that the sample was representative but not overwhelming.

Qualitative methodology favours an inductive data analysis in which data generation and analysis precede theory-building to reveal unexpected outcomes. Deductive analysis, on the other hand, tries to prove or disprove clearly-stated hypotheses, and theory precedes data collection and analysis (Borg and Gall, p. 386). The inductive pattern certainly describes the logic of thesis: the partial abandonment of my original focus as stated in the thesis proposal half-way through the process meant that I had to reconstruct my focus and, only after I had obtained enough data and analyzed them, to give the new focus some meaning. It was from this hard-won sense of meaning that the present focus and themes of this thesis emerged, a sense that was built in equal measure by what was (not) seen and (not) heard and by hunches, and intuitions and by developing a feel for the emotional context of the process.

Qualitative study is noted for the development of theory "grounded in the data" of the study itself, and for the view that such theory is preferable over constructs entirely derived from the literature which are viewed as less reliable (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 386). The problem with this assertion is that when the study comprises only one focus of attention, namely one commission, it is difficult to make reference to theory grounded in the same data for any comparison; thus, what literature-generated "theory" exists should be taken seriously. Secondly, this position perhaps overestimates the capacity of the social/policy sciences to produce theory with an external and internal validity sufficient to describe the complexity of human behaviour as we enter an era of great technological, political, and value uncertainty. Consequently, the most this thesis can aspire to in theory-building is, in an heuristic sense, (Merriam, 1988, p. 13) pushing forward for further examination the workings and substance of a royal commission, attentive to what the literature tells us about other royal commissions and similar bodies. As this study is of "one case," I thought it prudent to observe Borg and Gall’s caveat (1989, p. 402): "[T]here is no way of knowing how typical the selected case really is, and it is therefore rather hazardous to draw any general conclusions from a single case study".

The subject, or the person(s) studied, play a role in interpreting outcomes: "Because the
qualitative researcher usually attempts to reconstruct reality from the frame of reference of the subjects, it follows logically that the respondents" may be better situated to understand "complex interactions" and "local values" than the researcher (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 386).

This dissertation could not have been written had I not obtained some degree of acceptance by my colleagues within RCOL, and building trust is not an easily-constructed value for the local ethnographer who is mentally and mechanically noting rituals, (no)-words, tones, gestures, and other behaviours, and who is planning to write about all of this in a publicly-demonstrative fashion such as a defended dissertation. As individuals, my colleagues at RCOL were also inveterate data-gatherers, hypothesizers, and analysts, and particularly my researcher colleagues had much to say on office scuttlebutt and politics; as well, they were high-level conceptualizers throughout my year-and-a-half stay. This is a discourse better observed in the natural setting of work as it is happening, albeit with an odd prompt or two from the observer. While a tape-recorded semi-structured interview schedule was administered after the Commission's demise, many of the questions posed in that format were partly the product of the literature, but more importantly raised during the process of the Commission, and a product of the interaction between observation and participation.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter, I have presented some background about the focus of this dissertation, Ontario's Royal Commission on Learning, sketched the outlines of the conceptual framework, posed the major research questions, described the significance of this study, detailed some delimitations and limitations, and defined some of the key terms. I followed this discussion with an overview of the methodology employed for this study. In the following chapter, I present a selective literature review on the three perspectives of royal commissions that form the main conceptual framework for this dissertation: construction of knowledge, of multiple purposes, and of organization.
CHAPTER 2 - MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES ON (ROYAL) COMMISSIONS

In the first section of this chapter I analyze various salient topics related to this thesis: commissions of inquiry as multiple-purpose public instruments, as implements in knowledge construction and as organizations, areas that are central to the development of a conceptual framework for this study; American commissions on education, for context; Canadian commissions and notable policy documents on education, for a comparison of trends; and major issues in Canadian education from a political philosophy perspective, to provide a conceptual understanding of these issues. By the end of this chapter, the reader should have an understanding of a number of commission-related topics: types, functions, constraints, mandates and interpretation, composition, controversies and criticisms, impact, the elements of knowledge generation, and organizational characteristics. In the section on American and Canadian educational commissions I identify the major themes of more recent commissions and the ideologically-grounded debates that are sparked by commission reports. I conclude this chapter with a summary of RCOL's recommendations, as this overview will help the reader understand the substantive issues discussed throughout this dissertation.

THE MULTIPLE PURPOSES OF COMMISSIONS

Canadian fact-finding commissions have their origins in English governmental history, at least as far back as the Commission on Enclosures in 1517. This English institution was passed onto the British colonies and later dominions as part of their constitutional heritage, with adaptations in each setting as to the scope of commission powers and composition (Goulson, 1981, p.v).

Both the British and American variants of commissions bear a striking resemblance to their Canadian counterparts. From the American context, several generic functions for commissions include: providing policy advice and evaluation, promoting public relations, calling attention to various problems, fact-finding (especially after national strikes), and recommending policy (Ginsberg and Plank, 1995, p.3). The functions of modern British commissions have been described as a source of dispassionate and impartial advice for difficult policy issues, and as a way to examine policy problems that are "supernonroutine"; as a means of addressing a moral conundrum facing the state and society; and as a
form of symbolic action (Bulmer, 1993, p.41-42).

Canadian royal commissions are public, ad hoc, and investigatory. They are public instruments whose unique status is defined in public law, and are established and funded by either the federal or a provincial government for specific purposes of inquiry into areas delineated in a mandate by a government. Commissions are ad hoc in the sense that they can be created through governmental decree, serve for a specified period of time at the government's pleasure, and usually disbanded once the inquiry report is given to the government. They are also investigatory, charged with probing policy-related issues and/or with fact-finding (Mackay, 1990).

Public inquiries fall under three major categories: determination of public policy, review of political judgement, and determination of guilt or innocence. While some inquiries include all three categories, such as Nova Scotia's Marshall Inquiry (Mackay, 1990, p.33), the vast majority of inquiries into education fall within the "determination of policy" category, and are characterized less by judicial fact-finding, dominated by the legal profession, and more by a policy-advice and consultative approach, overseen by government-appointed commissioners chosen from a variety of professional backgrounds. Mawhinney's study (1993) suggests a fourth general type of commission: commissions of inquiry may also broker consensual agreements among conflicting interests that are activated during the implementation of policy.

Commissions for the determination of policy are established to provide governments with policy advice, most commonly in the form of a report with recommendations for policy action. This advice is the product of a commission's process of policy analysis undertaken by commissioners, research staff, and contracted experts, a process that, broadly-defined, comprises "those activities aimed at developing knowledge relevant to the formulation and implementation of public policy" (Torgerson, 1986, p.33).

A key knowledge-building activity, and a defining characteristic of several high-profile commissions, is extensive public consultation, most commonly in the form of public hearings. After studying a commission's report and recommendations, a government must make a decision as to which recommendations, if any, should be translated into new statute law and/or policy regulations and initiatives to be implemented. Because royal commissions demonstrate a government's concern to improve the quality of policy making, Wilson (1971, p.117) argues that commissions should be viewed not simply as inputs into policy formulation, but also as governmental policy outputs. The recent
controversy concerning the federal government's truncation of the Somalia Inquiry suggests that a commission may also be perceived as a "problem" by elected officials who fear that findings may embarrass a government-of-the-day.

Commissions can be important instruments for policy analysis: allowing decision-makers in government to delay or postpone decisions; providing for a process whereby the views of special interest groups and the interested public can be presented in a forum that is not subject to direct government control; and representing the most effective option available to government for policy analysis undertaken by an independent and objective, yet official, organization. Four factors may undermine this policy analysis capacity: the executive appointment of commissioners; the commission's appointment of staff; the limitations of time for research; and finally, the limitations which are inherent in temporary, ad hoc organizations (Aucoin, 1971, p.199).

The executive appointment of commissioners is a critical issue, as who is appointed to lead a commission defines in large measure what issues get debated and the breadth or narrowness of the debate. Commissioner backgrounds may skew how the issues are perceived. Writing about the composition of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Jeffrey Simpson noted (The Globe and Mail, Feb. 26, 1997, p. A16):

The [federal] government...appointed four aboriginals and three non-aboriginals as commissioners. That decision immediately tilted the commission toward an aboriginal perspective, but the tilt soon became more evident.

Two non-aboriginals were judges - Rene Dussault and Bertha Wilson. Judge Wilson was known for her expansive interpretations of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms while she was on the Supreme Court. Judge Dussault was an unknown quantity as a policy analyst, and policy rather than law was central to the commission's work.

Judges, by definition, know little about administration, and their policy advice tends to be rooted in the abstract. Judge Wilson, for example, had tended in her Supreme Court judgments to brush aside matters of cost or administrative inconvenience.

To this group was then added at least one person who had actually run something in the real world - Allan Blakeney, a highly successful former premier of Saskatchewan. For a while, Mr Blakeney stuck with the commission, but he bailed out because he sensed correctly that the commission was heading toward a reading of history that, whatever its accuracy, would not lead to pragmatic, workable, politically saleable solutions...
A commission of inquiry may transcend a narrow definition of policy analysis and evaluation, to reveal points of consensus, and to mobilize public support for policy change (Christie and Pross, 1990, p.1):

Commissions of inquiry have been popular mechanisms with Canadian governments. Despite a widespread view that they are used principally to delay action while removing embarrassment from the immediate vicinity of governments, it is a fact that commissions of inquiry have repeatedly - and often highly successfully - served as vehicles for analyzing policy, for evaluating outdated or failed policy, for identifying a consensus about policy, and for building support for new directions.

As a unique vehicle for public consultation and a centre of a social network, commissions can serve a vital "nodality" role, a direct inquiry device used by policy makers to obtain information to guide future action (Pal, 1992). As policy advice instruments, "[t]he policy maker sees commissions of inquiry as stepping stones to policy, [the most important functions being] the elucidation and education of public opinion, the discovery and exploration of policy options and the making of recommendations for action" (Christie and Pross, 1990, p. 4).

Although creatures of (executive) government, commissions operate at "arm's-length", with the government surrendering "some of its policy initiative, in particular its initiative to identify the issues and to create public expectations and shape public opinion as to what is a reasonable legislative approach" (LeDain, 1973, p.80). In contrast to a regular government department, commissions are not answerable to the executive branch (Mackay, 1990).

The "length of the arm" between government and commission varies according to the will of the government, the temper of the times, and the particular needs of a commission. For example, in the case of the Somalia inquiry that investigated the events surrounding the murder of a Somalia youth by Canadian soldiers, the federal government's decision to limit the calling of witnesses for public hearings as of March 31, 1997 sparked public criticism from commissioners who complained that the imposition of the deadline by the Liberal government was unwarranted political interference. Mr. Justice Gilles Letourneau, the commission's chair, proclaimed: "I won't be an instrument of a whitewash" (The Globe and Mail, Feb. 13, 1997, p.A1). While the Star's editorial writers (with a bias of long duration for the Liberals) characterized Letourneau's reaction as "sourgrapes" (Feb. 13, 1997, A26), their counterparts at the Globe and Mail (historically much less sympathetic to the Liberal Party) likened the government's
demand for closure to President Nixon's attempts to stifle the Watergate investigation (Feb. 18, 1997, p. A14). During the same time period, Mr. Justice Krever, according to documents obtained by reporters under the Access to Information Act, accused the federal government in 1996 of threatening to shut down his inquiry about the collection and distribution of tainted blood in the public health system, unless he agreed to withdraw notices that federal officials might be blamed in his final report (The Globe and Mail, Mar. 11, 1997, p. A1). One of the noteworthy aspects that joins the Krever and RCOL inquiries, is that Monique Begin, a former Minister of Health, invoked the principle of ministerial accountability to insist that her name remain on the list of possible guilty parties. Her action, praised in editorials, remained in sharp contrast with the behaviour of other former federal officials and of notables in other organizations such as the Canadian Red Cross, who have steadfastly challenged Krever's determination to "name names".

Commissions typically have broadly-defined mandates as outlined in an Order-in-Council, and the arm's-length relationship often implies that how commissioners interpret that mandate is a critical issue beyond government reach: "The terms of reference for commissions of inquiry are usually broadly stated and governments have little control over the shape or direction of the inquiry" (Mackay, 1990, p.34).

The interpretation of the mandate is squarely on the shoulders of the commissioners, and this interpretation may push the direction of a task force or commission in a direction that the government could not have foreseen or wanted. Even tightly-focussed terms of reference may be subject to a liberal interpretation by commissioners who exploit their relatively-independent status to make what they consider to be an original contribution to policy advice (Cameron, 1993):

So the Pepin-Robarts Task Force - for those who gave it life - was supposed to be rather like what the Spicer Commission in fact became more than a dozen years later - a national exercise in public consultation reporting on public opinion but offering little or nothing in the way of policy proposals. (p.334)

This was not to be. Instead, the Task Force produced three publications at the end of its life, one of which was a substantial report with analysis and a set of recommendations far from congenial to the Trudeau Government. (p. 334)

...That the Government got more than it bargained for from the Task Force is not surprising. When a government launches an inquiry into a large and ill-defined field such as national unity, the degree to which it can shape the commission's work by the definition of its mandate is small. Resourceful minds and strong wills can find ample room to
manoeuvre within even the most clearly constituted mandate. (p. 335)

A legal constraint to the scope of inquiry is the need to "operate within the constitutional authority of the level of government which created it" (MacKay, 1990, p.35). Another constraint on the discretion of commissions is political, being sensitive to public opinion and developing recommendations that "appeal to as broad a segment of the public as possible" (Wilson, 1971, p.116). A third constraint arises from the need to take account of the fiscal/economic environment and the costs attached to recommendations. A fourth constraint is related to the budget of the commission itself, its capacity to engage in research, and its opportunity to promote its activities.

The need to take into account the fiscal/economic environment is illustrated by the following commentary on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples by Globe and Mail columnist Jeffrey Simpson (Feb. 26, 1997, p.A16):

...[This] is a report that "blue skies" everything; that is, it sets forth maximalist positions, or wish-lists if you like, that have little, if any chance of being adopted...

...At the very moment when Canadian governments are reducing money for health care, education, regional development, unemployment insurance, welfare, public broadcasting and a host of other worthy activities, it is illusory to call for up to $2-billion a year in additional spending for aboriginals in each of the next 20 years...

The definition of legal constraints to the powers of inquiries is an on-going and controversial issue. Concerning the Krever Commission, the Canadian Red Cross Society filed a legal brief in February 1997 before the Supreme Court of Canada, asking it to settle whether federal and provincial inquiries can "tar people with the same sort of stigma that attaches to a criminal conviction." The brief also asks the justices to identify the kinds of legal "safeguards" that the "targets" of those inquiries can use to protect themselves. Previously, the Court had ruled that an inquiry cannot be expressly created to determine whether an individual broke the law. It had not dealt with the issue of whether a general inquiry which looks at broad issues can assign blame to people. The Red Cross had lost two lower court rulings that said Justice Horace Krever can cite the Red Cross and others for misconduct in the blood supply context (The Toronto Star, Feb. 13, 1997, p. A26).

Simpson (The Globe and Mail, Jan. 22, 1997, p. A14) argues that the central problem of today's federal inquiries is that the law describing such inquiries is over a century old and is ill-suited for the
demands of a rights-conscious citizenry in post-Charter-of-Rights Canada:

The wider issue raised by these recent inquiries that have gone on and on at considerable cost ($51-million for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, $15-million and counting for Krever, $14-million forecast for Somalia) is whether the Inquiries Act itself might need a second look after more than a century. Or, if not, perhaps governments should be much more careful in setting terms of reference, choosing commissioners and insisting that deadlines and budgets be met.

This quote also raises another frequent criticism about commissions of late: the often staggering costs that such inquiries can incur. A list of twenty-four federally-appointed commissions of inquiry since 1982 shows that the costs vary widely, whether they are of the policy-oriented type or the judicially-oriented (fact-finding) type. The following inquiries (not including the three cited above) cost in the range of $20 million to $30 million: Economic union and development prospects for Canada, 1982-1985, (the MacDonald Commission); New reproductive technologies, 1989-1993; Electoral reform and party financing, 1989-1992; and the Citizens' forum on Canada's future, 1990-1991. In the $10 million to $20 million range are the following: Ocean Ranger marine disaster 1982-1985; the Air Ontario crash at Dryden, Ontario, 1989-1992; and National passenger transportation, 1989-1992. By way of comparison, The Royal Commission on Learning, a provincially-appointed commission on education, cost in the range of $3 million to $4 million, putting it in the same "ballpark" as the following inquiries: Use of drugs and banned practices intended to increase athletic performance, 1988-1990; War criminal, 1985-1987; and Accident investigation and safety board act, 1993-1994 (Globe and Mail, Mar. 29, 1997, p. A5).

Present opinion on the viability and usefulness of commissions of inquiry is polarized, judging from recent comments about inquiries (Globe and Mail, Mar. 29, 1997, p. A5). Bryan Schwartz, a University of Manitoba law professor, asserts a critical view: "The dilatory, inconclusive or heavy-handed character of a number of recent public enquiries and royal commissions may produce a public backlash that leads to their not being used in some cases where they are genuinely required." On the other hand, Ed Ratushny, a University of Ottawa law professor, opines that inquiries remain the best way of dealing with issues that are not specific enough for a court-of-law but that still need public probing: "I see them as still potentially having an extremely valuable role to play if the situation is appropriate." Professor Richard Simeon of the University of Toronto blames the escalation of costs in public inquiries less on "mismanagement" and more on the "legalization" of the inquiry process, when commissions adopt the
trappings of an adversarial-based court system. A recent poll by the Ottawa-based Ekos Research Associates Inc. found that negative public attitudes about inquiries are in the majority. Said Ekos president Frank Graves in this regard: "In most cases, the desire for openness and so forth loses to the appearance that royal commissions are expensive, ponderous exercises that rarely result in the public interest."

The current many-sided criticisms of commissions of inquiry prompted one observer to fear the demise of the commission as a public and cultural instrument that is vital to Canadian-style democracy:

...I consider public inquiries another form of Canadian culture under threat. If you don't think inquiries count as culture, you didn't see the Westray commission, when (a former Nova Scotia Premier) tried to squirm around his closeness to a mine owner - 'I attended the reception, I didn't attend the wedding' - and miners and their families at the hearing just guffawed (Rick Salutin, The Globe and Mail, Feb. 7, 1997, p. C1).

Reacting to this perceived threat to a form of Canadian political culture, former federal cabinet secretary Nicholas d'Ombrain contends that the future of royal commissions should be the focal point of study by a royal commission established for this purpose (Globe and Mail, Mar. 29, 1997, p. A5!)

A characteristic of Canadian royal commissions is the extensive use of research. The work of a royal commission differs from the daily policy process and can often employ a longer time frame perspective than "normal" policy making. The arm's-length distance from the government may also stimulate more innovative thinking than may be produced within the confines of the civil bureaucracy. This longer-term perspective and relative independence may help royal commissions to develop, in many cases, a conceptual research position which seeks a broader understanding of the policy problem. This conceptual approach may be compared with an instrumental research position that produces facts to inform everyday policy decisions. A legitimating research position does not find evidence to lay the foundation for future policies but rather to legitimate policy positions already taken by those in power. Major commissions may include all three research positions: "The issue becomes the balance among the three" (Rubenson, 1989, p.6).

Research may serve a number of functions within a commission. Bulmer (1993, pp.43-44) writes that [British] commissions exhibit six different modes of incorporating research: 1) little or no research; 2) research commissioned, but to little or no effect; 3) research as argument; 4) research as underpinning of conclusion; 5) research as integral to conclusions; and 6) research as the primary or even sole purpose
of the commission. By inference, it would seem that establishing which modes are dominant in a
commission is a task that could only be sorted out by insiders who have intimate knowledge of the entire
process.

Public access to commissions of inquiry is a growing trend (Salter and Slaco, 1981; Torgerson,
1986), complicating the process by inviting controversy but also promoting the political viability of an
inquiry's recommendations (Mackay, 1990, p.46):

[There is] a growing desire by members of the public to be involved in the formation of
decision and to have full access to the process...This facilitates the educational mandate of
inquiries but can complicate the articulation of public policy on controversial issues.
However, the open process greatly reduces the chances that the ultimate
recommendations of a commission will be ignored by the government or significantly out
of touch with the broader public opinion on the matter.

With an increased public profile and greater public access to hearings, commissioners and
commissioners are increasingly subject to a greater public demands for accountability: "[The] combination
of high public profile and increased expectation of accountability adds new levels of difficulty to the
satisfactory operation of a commission of inquiry" (Mackay, 1990, p.47).

Informing the broader public about the aims and activities of a commission is an important role
of the media. But as inquiries multiply in number, this understandably creates problems of understanding
and reporting for members of the fifth estate: "In a time when inquiries are created for a vast array of
social problems, the difficulty which the media may have in delineating the role of a particular commission
is understandable" (Mackay, 1990, p.31). The growing popularity of the use of commissions may also
have contributed to inquiries suffering from a publicly-perceived "identity crisis...The juxtaposition of
commissions of inquiry and identity crises provides a quintessential Canadian topic" (Mackay, 1990,
p.30).

A frequent criticism of commissions is that their recommendations often have little impact on
policy making, as governments may ignore core recommendations, thus leaving a report "to gather dust";
or to use only those recommendations that fit their own agenda, for legitimacy purposes; or modify,
distort, and partially implement recommendations in ways not in keeping with the spirit of core
recommendations. In short, this logic suggests, commissions are expensive wastes of taxpayers' money
and time, with negligible impacts on policy development. In this vein, in response to the federal

Judging a commission’s success by its immediate impact on policy making, or by the degree to which a government implements inquiry recommendations, may be a misleading approach to assess commission impact (Christie and Pross, 1990, p.13), as the relationship between input and output is complicated, and short-term response may not be a useful indicator of long-term effect:

The fact that a government appears to accept [recommendations] or reject them tells us very little about their real influence on its thinking. A recommendation that is ultimately rejected may have been influential. On the other hand, a government claim that it is following commission advice may be misleading; commissions are quite capable of telling a government what they know it wants to hear. Input does not explain output. [It may be more useful] to assess [them] for their role in the development of policy debate than to evaluate them in terms of the acceptance or rejection of their recommendations. Their impact on the processes of policy analysis is generally more significant than their capacity to deliver acceptable recommendations.

The Rowell-Sirois Commission of the 1930s is an example of where recommendations were largely ignored by the government of the day. The Commission had a major long-term impact on Canadian political and social thinking nonetheless (Fransen, 1984, p. 466):

The [commission] officials had failed to achieve the specific reforms they wanted. Politicians overruled them, but officials won in the long run as the philosophical groundwork for the social welfare state had been laid.

In a somewhat similar view, Oliver (1993) argues that although the key concept of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (ending in 1970), equal partnership between English-speaking and French-speaking Canada, faded in influence and popularity in the 1970s and 1980s, an altered and expanded version of the same concept was central to the proposed Charlottetown agreement of the Canadian provinces in August 1992.

Another view suggests that caution should be exercised in dismissing the efficacy of royal commissions because a government chose not to implement most of its recommendations. Instead, one should examine which implemented recommendations appeal to which groups: "The royal commission device has encompassed certain features which allow it to be, when necessary, an incremental politicking
device par excellence: there can be something for everybody within its bag of recommendations" (Wilson, 1971, p.119). Most commissions' recommendations may be destined for incremental policy change, as many recommendations are often neither new nor bold: "It is often the case that many of the 'new' proposals are, to rephrase an old adage, old wine in new bottles" (Wilson, 1971, p.199).

Another student of public administration in Canada, with a similar view about the reformist stance of many commissions, says that the odds favour that commissions will be reformist and not radical, a reflection of those who are appointed to them and the context of the times (Simeon, 1987, p.170):

By their very nature, commissions can be no more than meliorative and reformist, rather than revolutionary. Members are representative of established elites. Commissions are also creatures of their times: perhaps the best that can be expected is that they collect, and then express, a shifting conventional wisdom, tilting it in one or other way, but working well within the bounds of the existing order.

Torgerson (1986) would probably find fault with the notion that royal commissions are necessarily reformist in the context of public policy analysis, if the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry (1974-1977), popularly known as the Berger Commission, is considered. Torgerson argues that the Berger Commission, as an instrument of policy analysis, represented a radical departure in the relationship between knowledge and politics, a third "face." He contends that policy analysis has three distinct "faces: one where knowledge purports to replace politics, one where politics masquerades as knowledge, and one where knowledge and politics attain a measure of reconciliation" (p.33). Torgerson claims that the Berger Commission presented a third face of policy analysis (p. 47):

[T]he Berger Inquiry can be described as a relatively open forum allowing the articulation of divergent interests and perspectives. The Inquiry solicited and received scholarly reports on various dimensions of the pipeline issue. The research, however, was not simply accepted at face value. Impact statements countered one another; study challenged study. With replies, rebuttals, cross examinations, debate moved at a high degree of sophistication. Scholarly research, moreover, remained only one aspect of the process. For members of the public, both regionally and nationally, were not only permitted, but encouraged to speak their minds.

The impact of the Berger Commission was equally radical, in the opinion of Torgerson (1986, p. 49):

[The Inquiry] became something more than a setting where interests could be freely articulated; it became a forum also for the clarification and recognition of interests. In fact, the Inquiry itself had a significant impact, culturally and politically, on the native peoples...[It] was the "midwife" to a political transformation in the region which saw
important institutional innovations combined with the emergence of the native peoples as a significant force.

While the Berger Commission may indeed represent the third face of policy analysis, and a possible reconciliation of knowledge and politics, Torgerson (1986, p.39) laments that other exemplars of this face "can today still be seen only dimly, if at all." In other words, while commissions of inquiry are not necessarily reformist and incremental, radical alternatives are rare.

COMMISSIONS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

Bulmer (1993), writing about British commissions and departmental committees, contends that they comprise "important instruments whereby knowledge is created, assembled and used for public policy-making, but one which needs to be examined more critically than is done in some of the literature" (p.38). The same could be said for Canadian commissions.

Knowledge is both the lifeblood and a product of commissions. Commissioners and their researchers must sift through an often bewildering array of values, facts, and opinions, organize this mass of information so that it may be assimilated, interpret what it means, form their own judgments, agree consensually about what they want to say in the report, and find agreement about who should write, in what tone and style, and how much should be written. The two primary sources for this knowledge generation are public hearings and the efforts of research staff and contracted experts.

Public hearings may contribute more to the process than simply providing legitimacy to the commission, by serving as an important learning tool for the commissioners and as a means to test the feasibility of recommendations. An observation from Thomas Berger (1977, Vol. 2, p. 228)), himself a commissioner, testifies to the lasting impact that hearings may have on commissioners:

No academic treatise or discussion, formal presentation of the claims of native people by the native organizations and their leaders, could offer as compelling and vivid a picture of the goals and aspirations of native people as their testimony. In no other way could we have discovered the depth of feeling regarding past wrongs and future hopes, and the determination of native people to assert their collective identity today and in the years to come.

That the native people had the opportunity to influence commissioner thinking is largely attributable to Berger's design of the hearings process, in which the Commission went to many native communities to
solicit views (Torgerson, 1986). Berger displayed a positive bias towards inclusion of native voices, and wanting to hear them, he changed the format of the hearings.

The strategic view of the commissioners, however, must somehow transcend the often immediate concerns of hearings' presenters (Cairns, 1990, p.105):

The commissioners were the focal point for two major streams of potential influence, the hearings process and the research analyses. The influence of the former is often slighted by critics who view it as essentially a legitimizing requirement or as a consciousness-raising exercise to generate a supportive climate for the pending report...The hearings process gave commissioners a sense of confidence and a feeling for the vastness and diversity of the country that not all commissioners had previously experienced...On the other hand, a commission whose agenda focuses on the long run may be pulled too far in the direction of contemporary politics by the pressures of the immediate issues that typically dominate the personal agenda of petitioners.

The importance of the hearings as a learning experience raises the question of the role of commission research and its linkage to the hearings process. In this respect, Christie and Pross (1990, p.12) note Cairns' finding (1990) that researcher activity within the Macdonald Commission was "carried out as a stream of activity separate from the hearings process" and question whether the hearings would have contributed anything but a "vague sense in the commissioners' minds of the nature of the problem they are investigating."

If the knowledge produced by hearings and research may be described as two separate streams that may or not coalesce in the thinking of the commissioners, so the relationship of commissioners and researchers may be described as two separate streams because of different perceptions about the use of generated knowledge and conflicting work commitments that isolate commissioners and researchers throughout extended periods (Cairns, 1990, p. 95).

While commissioners and researchers may be locked into a system of interdependence, their mutual role expectations within the Macdonald Commission did not mesh easily: researchers from academic backgrounds cherished their independence and chafed at constraints such as commissioner-driven choices of subject matter and timetables for discussion; commissioners, who would drift in and out of the process, could only provide "selective and intermittent" guidance to the research process (Cairns, 1990, p.96).

As professional staff within a commission, researchers are key players in the process of knowledge
generation; their expertise both is a resource and can be used as a source of power. Ideas and policy alternatives are developed in a process of argumentation, and a commission report is frequently couched in the terms of an extended argument that stakes out a particular position; but commissioners and researchers also argue about argumentation. Researchers may tenaciously defend their ideas and positions and not defer to commissioners. For example, Fransen (1984, pp. 350-375) details the struggle between commissioners and researchers over various positions within the Rowell-Sirois Commission, where both sides fought "over sentences" for extended periods of time, and where researchers strove to preserve the integrity of "their" ideas from what they considered intrusive "revisions" by commissioners.

Another dimension of the tensions within a task force/commission is "dilution" of research results. In the case of the Ontario Jackson Commission on Declining Enrollments, this dilution was seen as reflective of "the Commissioner's preference for familiar sources" (over researcher findings) and also reflective of the "divergence between the researchers and the commissioner's judgements of what to emphasize in the result". This type of divergence is called pre-release "vulnerability to amendment" (Enns, 1982, p.208). Ultimately, the recommendations of a commission may be accepted or rejected, in part or in whole, by the government of the day and are subject to "post-release vulnerabilities", i.e., significant modification (Enns, 1982, p.208).

Some commissions like Macdonald possess a large research staff that pursues original research in several disciplines; others like Pepin-Robarts employ a smaller staff whose primary task is to synthesize existent research from a variety of sources in formats conducive for internal discussion. "Some commissions are identified almost as much by their research and research publications as by their final report and its recommendations" (Cameron, 1993, p. 337). The published research of several federal royal commissions, (e.g., Rowell-Sirois, Bilingualism and Bi-culturalism, Macdonald) have attained the status of much-consulted "classics". Research can be driven by its own imperatives, fuelled by the "entrepreneurial ambitions" of research directors and coordinators, a large research budget, and a broad mandate (Cairns, 1990, p.88).

Knowledge generation within commissions can be constrained by the division of labour of the researchers, each researcher having a limited grasp of his/her portfolio, working in isolation to meet deadlines. Until the very end of the process, the "big picture" may elude all but a chosen few: "Only a tiny coterie of senior commission officials coordinating the entire process, and some of the commissioners
themselves, had a grasp of the whole. Hence, any individual researcher was only privy to a limited set of deliberations" (Simeon, 1987, pp. 168-169).

Commissioner "digestion" or rather indigestion of research products can be problematic, as the amount of research rises, and the speed of cogitation and discussion increases, not without creating significant tension (Cairns, 1990, p.97). Pleasing commissioners with the efforts of researchers may be difficult, as research can be dismissed as "too abstract, clinical, dehumanized and removed from the aspirations and sufferings of real people" (Cairns, 1990, p.100).

What knowledge is generated, and what knowledge is excluded in commission research, are in large measure defined by the backgrounds of the researchers and what disciplines shape the lenses through which policy problems are attended. Within the Macdonald Commission (Simeon, 1987, p. 171):

> The decision to organize three research divisions, defined by discipline, meant that other disciplines - and their perspectives on the Macdonald agenda - were not represented...To privilege some disciplines, and some tendencies within them, was of course to "disprivilege" others, such as sociology or geography, with their own distinctive policy perspectives.

Thus, in addition to a bias towards inclusion or exclusion of groups, voices, and interests in the hearings or special presentations phases, within a research design commissions may exhibit a bias towards the organization and treatment of professional knowledges.

Through the research design, a bias can develop as to which information has more value. Commissions, because they are policy advice instruments, seek out and value "usable" knowledge that can be translated into terms that policy makers understand and can use to fashion policy. In Macdonald, research was described as "soft" and "hard". This distinction centres on the degree of correlation between means and ends, about whether policy options are construed to be able to satisfy the goals for which they are intended. "Soft" and "hard" also had value connotations within Macdonald: "The economists tended to dominate the 'hard' values of efficiency and growth; the 'soft' values of equity and social justice were relegated to other sections, and there was felt to be a direct trade-off between the two sets of concerns" (Simeon, 1987, p. 172).

While "harder" research may suggest a tighter fit between the means and ends, this presumption does not absolve the primary role of deliberation, interpretation, and judgment by the commissioners, a process that may be described as more "soft" than "hard" (Cairns, 1990, p.100): "Neither research nor
the hearings could banish the ultimate necessity of choice by the Commissioners in these matters. Ground to stand on had to be sought in social philosophies, intuitions, and historic prejudices."

Two perspectives on social science research in the context of British Columbia’s Sullivan Commission (1988) raise important questions about the use of research. The first perspective argues that the Sullivan Commission’s use of social science research was flawed because it accepted largely contracted-out research as the uncontested state of the art instead of allowing for more vigorous contesting of research views and systematic testing of alternatives on a pilot basis. Consequently, research was seen to legitimate policy decisions largely already taken, and not to serve conceptual or instrumental purposes (Richardson, 1988). The second perspective criticizes the political and administrative concerns of the Ministry which outweighed considerations of substance, neglecting to involve implementors more thoroughly in a protracted discussion of proposed changes to curriculum assessment and school organization (Werner, 1990). LaRocque and Whitely (1996), along the lines of Werner (1990), emphasize that the failure of B.C’s Year 2000 Plan, "a radically different agenda for education", can largely be traced by the failure of the Ministry to provide educators and non-educators alike with the support and leadership that such a massive undertaking demanded. In this view, the Plan was sabotaged by the lack of an implementation strategy designed to promote "reculturation", not a simple restructuring (Laroque and Whitely, 1996, p. 98).

Personalities, outside events, and a nexus of "outside" people, including specialists in private sessions, and in other organizations, may play a strong role in knowledge generation. A key outside influence on the thinking of many commissions, and a reality check, is the use of a select number of "wise" persons or outside readers who "offer general counsel...review draft material, and...reassure the Commissioners about the validity of the information and advice they were receiving from the research staff" (Cameron, 1993, p. 338).

The interpretation of contextual and climate considerations may play a large role in commissioners' thinking, as they keep an eye on the direction on outside structural forces and the force of public ideas. For Macdonald, the strength of the U.S. economy at the time of deliberations tilted thinking towards a positive consideration of free trade. On the other hand, the rise in a loss of faith in the efficacy of government steered the same commissioners away from advocating a strong interventionist role for the state (Simeon, 1987, p. 177).
A written report is a major product, if not the major product in the life cycle of a commission: "A commission is chiefly remembered for its final report" (Cameron, 1993, p. 333). The life cycle of most commissions is usually short, and aside from the public profile accorded to public hearings and general media attention around specific phases of a commission, the report is the only tangible legacy that commission members possess in order to make their mark on the direction of the discussion of vexing public issues and what governments should do about them. Most mandate statements include the expectation that the main form of policy advice that a government expects to receive will be in the form of a written report, to be handed over to the government by a specified date.

To judge from the experience of Macdonald and Pepin-Robarts, a report does not emerge from a well-developed hierarchy of goals and ideas and a clear sense of direction. Significantly, Cairns (1990, p.99) notes that "the [Macdonald] Commission's own philosophy, or basic policy direction, only emerged after virtually all of the research had been commissioned." In other words, the direction of research was dislocated from the overall themes that were eventually considered central to the Commission's findings. The big picture became apparent through a long inductive process, not assembled in a top-down deductive manner. In this respect Cameron (1993) relates how the Pepin-Robarts report got written. For months, staff laboured on working drafts that kept expanding in an aimless fashion: the "territory to be covered was so vast and ill defined, it was difficult to give it shape and focus" (p. 339). The interventions of two outside editors were largely misspent (p. 339):

...Nothing seemed to be working; neither the recommendations nor the text seemed to be coming into focus, and we were finding it hard to express coherently the integrating principles of regionalism, duality and power sharing that the Task Force had fashioned for itself in the course of the previous twelve months. We were also finding it difficult to settle on a set of recommendations that adequately reflected those principles.

For Pepin-Robarts, "[s]alvation came from outside" (Cameron, 1993, p. 339) in the form of a galvanizing event, an upcoming constitutional conference, motivating members of the Task Force to make a contribution in the form of a report, something not called for in their mandate, and setting a deadline for the report spurred purposeful organizational action (Cameron, 1993):

Setting a real deadline, credible to themselves and authoritative so far as the staff were concerned, was probably the most critical single decision the Commissioners made with respect to the final report. All other matters for resolution became consequential on that prior commitment. Recommendations had to be decided on; a satisfactory draft of the
final report, reflecting the philosophy of the commissioners, had to be produced. All of this - not to mention editing, translation, printing and distribution - had to be completed within a space of weeks. (p.340)

The psychological impact on commissioners and staff alike was dramatic; as one of the researchers said: "The Commissioners have fastened their seat belts and returned their chairs to the upright position. They're getting ready to land." (pp. 340-341)

The galvanizing event of a constitutional conference triggered the decision to make a report available, and the process of writing it under severe time constraints catalyzed decision-making and argumentation, bringing together various learnings and interactions that the "normal" process of the Task Force had not been able to produce.

The process of writing the Macdonald report turned out to be a long and convoluted affair, the contents of which remained unclear for much of the process, and the commitment to meet the deadline also figured strongly in tying up loose cognitive and organizational ends. Towards the deadline, the commissioners had to make a decision as to what the core message was going to be (Simeon, 1987, p. 178):

In the end, there was only one set of alternatives which appeared credible to the Commissioners. They did not so much cynically ignore the views of the "popular" sector as conclude that it did not address what they had come to believe was the central question. They thus became captives of a set of ideas which are close to hegemonic.

In this sense then, it was structural, contextual forces which shaped the report. At one level, the content of the report was uncertain almost to the end, but the result contained far greater direction and consistency than those involved could possibly have envisioned in the early stages.

For Macdonald and Pepin-Robarts, it was the daunting image of a deadline that catalyzed commissioners and researchers to commit themselves to what they wanted to say. In both cases, the actual writing of the report was accomplished in a fraction of the total mandated time, and through report writing, the major themes, principles, and goals emerged, the pieces of research began to fit together, and a process of interpretation coalesced.

COMMISSIONS AS ORGANIZATIONS

In this section I focus on those research findings that discuss how commissions as work
organizations manage to get the job done, and what are the challenges that some commissions have had to overcome in order to fulfill their mandates.

A noted political scientist and former research director of the Macdonald Commission in the mid-1980s, Allan Cairns (1990) offers the following observations on that commission's mandate, report content, and commissioner perspectives. The mandate, to study Canada's economic prospects in the mid-1980s and beyond, and make recommendations to ensure that Canada remained globally competitive, was so general and vaguely defined that commission members spent two-thirds of their time pondering which directions they should take. Ambiguity and "pervasive uncertainty" (p.91) marked the organization, as goals were unclear and the relationship of tasks to one another was nebulous. While the central expectation of the mandate was a written report, its content and style were only "dimly...discerned" (p.91) by commission members for much of the time.

The divergent backgrounds of 12 commissioners posed a particular challenge for the chair, Donald S. Macdonald, a former Minister of Finance and a lawyer, "not because the commissioners were a particularly fractious group, but because their varied backgrounds gave them differing perspectives on their collective task" (Cairns, 1990, p.90). Adding to the clash of internal perspectives were the viewpoints garnered from hearings across Canada in the fall of 1983 that elicited over 1100 briefs and over 700 oral presentations.

While the substantive endeavours of the Macdonald Commission were submerged in uncertainty and ambiguity, the instrumental means for accomplishing their mandate was no less than a mirror image of this state of affairs. Commissions may be temporary and project-driven, but they are organizations nonetheless, with mandates, expectations, roles, tasks, timelines, budgets, and personnel. Unlike most other organizations, however, commissions must learn to function without core elements that most organizations rely upon to accomplish their goals: standard operating procedures, routinization, task specificity, stable staffing, a shared organization culture, bureaucratic memory, and a commitment to organizational survival (Cairns, 1990, p.91). Each new task that a commission faces is a major organizational challenge, to be accomplished as a once-only experience, in a crisis atmosphere:

   Each royal commission commences with a clean slate. There are no bureaucratic memories and no old hands to educate newcomers in the genre's workings. Thus, each stage in the life of a royal commission is a new challenge, the response to which is not preplanned or predictable. For its major activities - the hearings, research and report
writing - there is no routinization, for they are not cyclically repeated activities following the seasons or the budget year, but are only experienced once (Cairns, p.91).

...[T]here is a recurrent and inescapable crisis atmosphere. This coincides with a great deal of groping, experimenting and learning on the job. The process is frantic, exhausting, exhilarating and at times seriously demoralizing. (Cairns, 1990, p.93)

Adding to the sense of fluidity within the Macdonald Commission, commissioners and researchers alike would drift in and out of the process: most members did not live in Ottawa where the headquarters were, and many had other professional commitments that diverted their energies (Cairns, 1990, pp.91-92).

A description of the work atmosphere within the Pepin-Robarts Task Force of the late 1970s resonates strongly with the above perception of an adhocacy on-the-fly.

If the experience of the Pepin-Robarts Task Force is anything to go by, the intensity of the work [within commissions] is fierce - long hours, unpredictable schedules; uncertainties which vein almost every working day; searing conflicts about the largest issues and the smallest slights; moments of giddy exhilaration and matchless camaraderie. All of this occurring in a small but bubbling cauldron of experience, some of it very much in the public eye, but much of it confined within the walls of the commission itself. Few people who have given themselves up to this curious form of professional existence leave unaffected (Cameron, 1993, p. 336).

Commissions face a number of major tasks that must be completed in combination and in succession. Commissions strive to fulfill mandated timelines to produce a report within a given time period, although there are notable exceptions, such as the Commission on Biligualism and Biculturalism that was halted after seven years without releasing a final report (Cameron, 1993). "Meeting the deadline" is the overriding goal of most commissions, and most succeed. Lack of time is their greatest constraint, as major tasks such as research and the writing of the report need to be started from scratch, jostling with all the other activities undertaken by a commission.

It is difficult to exaggerate the significance of limited time as a constraint on research and on the [Macdonald] Commission more generally...[A]n initial six months was consumed in the start-up activities of selecting the Commissioners and appointing key staff...[As a result, for] writing, editing, translating and publishing the final report, the effective working time was cut by one-third [and]...research did not get fully underway until most of the first year was over. (Cairns, 1990, p.97)

The diversity of task environments and professional backgrounds pulls the organization in several different directions, making coordination and integration problems a recurrent theme:
The Macdonald Commission experienced powerful centrifugal pressures. The nature of the mandate, the number of Commissioners and the diversity of their backgrounds, the amount of research and the three disciplinary streams through which it was channelled, and an extensive hearings process constituted strong centrifugal organizational and intellectual tendencies that the Commission constantly struggled to overcome. (Cairns, 1990, p.100)

The culture of a commission is defined by the lack of a cohesive set of member values, attitudes, and behaviours. Commitment to an organization that is temporary and in a permanent state of flux, filled with persons who come and go from other organizations and who will soon return to other work settings, is beyond a commission's grasp. In its place is a reliance upon individuals who take a personal pride in their work (Cameron, 1993, pp. 336-337).

The role of leadership within commissions is an important factor in the literature: a commission with strong centrifugal forces needs a countervailing force to hold it together. Leadership has several faces. Berger played the central role in ensuring that the Pipeline Inquiry would be a radical exercise in policy analysis (Torgerson, 1986). Within Pepin-Robarts, John Robarts played an important role, not in fashioning policy proposals on national unity which he described as an exercise "in shovelling fog" (Cameron, 1993, p. 341), but rather in communicating to commission members in an unstinting fashion that their mission was vital to saving the country. Within the Macdonald Commission, Donald Macdonald maintained a consistent intellectual and managerial presence in a complex organization defined by flux of personnel and rapidly changing tasks (Cairns, 1990; Simeon, 1987).

That the Macdonald Commission did manage to fulfill its mandate, despite these substantive and organizational constraints, may be attributed to members' "...civic sense of participating in a significant public activity" and to "[t]he memory of past commissions that have issued landmark reports, substantially influenced a major policy area, or both, that is a constant reminder of the judgement day ahead. A chairperson knows that his or reputation will be profoundly influenced by the quality of the report issued under his or her name" (Cairns, 1990, p.92).

Adhocery within commissions may serve as a three-fold catalyst: "[W]ithin limits the fluidity, uncertainty and unpredictability that pervade the existence of a large commission are functional: intellectually, by preventing premature closure on issues; politically, openness worked against the creation of identifiable minorities among the Commissioners at an early stage; and bureaucratically, by facilitating
the recurrent rearrangements of commission personnel in the light of new tasks and ongoing assessments of individual performance" (Cairns, 1990, pp.92-93).

More than two decades ago an academic observer of royal commissions pronounced the demise of inquiry adhocery, contending that commissions:

have been transformed from their ad hoc format, which many have felt was the source of their innovative capacity, to bureaucratic machinery, taking on most, if not all, the trappings of a government department. The sheer size and volume of the research to be undertaken, including the need for expenditure control, have made this regularization imperative and inevitable. (Wilson, 1971, p. 120)

The later research cited above, however, would suggest that this pronouncement, on adhocery giving way to a civil bureaucratic process, was premature. What is probably a more valid observation is that commissions may try to standardize, routinize, or "bureaucratize" at least some of the aspects of their work that are amenable to such interventions:

Having watched the chaos flower at the [Pepin-Robarts] Task Force and then subside as professional administrative staff were brought in to reduce the day-to-day life of the commission to routines and more-or-less normal management practices, I have to conclude that these difficulties must arise in every commission, that they are not in their nature politically charged or policy laden, and that the skills and experience necessary to address them are eminently transferable. (Cameron, 1993, p. 337)

Smith and Patterson (1994) also think that some of the management knowledge and skills for handling a royal commission are transferable, and to this end they authored a planning and organization model derived from their experience of the Royal Commission on National Passenger Transportation. Judging from their accounting of their experience, I would characterize their model as more in keeping with Wilson's observation and less aligned with the experience of Cairns, Simeon, and Cameron. In other words, commissions in relation to one another could probably be placed somewhere on a continuum, with boundaries established, on the one hand, by a free-flowing adhocery at the verge of chaos, and on the other hand, by a level of bureaucratization complete with standard operating procedures and routinization to a degree that would emasculate spontaneity and flexibility. Cameron's experience at Pepin-Robarts would also suggest that within each commission a similar tension between adhocery and bureaucratization may be at work.
AMERICAN COMMISSIONS ON EDUCATION

American experience with commissions on education is important for the considerations of this thesis. As instruments for policy analysis, they bear more than a passing resemblance to commissions in Canada; their operation may provide some conceptual insights with which to examine commissions. Although the American context is obviously different from Canada's, given that most of their education commissions are nationally-oriented, there are also important similarities, particularly in English-speaking Canada, that derive from sharing a common border and from heavy American influence in Canadian economic, cultural, even educational affairs.

Some observers of American commissions caustically dismiss their efficacy. Peterson (1983), for example, contends that education commission reports are too often full of meaningless rhetoric, the product of a stylized dance that inculcates a shallow consensus defined by entrenched institutional interests wedded to the status quo, full of recommendations that are so general and abstract as to be worthless for education reform.

While reports in Peterson's conception can be described as exercises in rhetoric, consumers of commission reports may be described as having three types of rhetoric as they react to reports:

The sacred turn is represented in the voices of those who accept and believe the official versions of reform. The sceptical turn is reflected in those who are obligated to question such official doctrine. The cynical turn is heard through those who disbelieve or disparage the doctrine. Thus, the sacred is characterized by faith, the sceptical by doubt, and the cynical by distrust. (Garman and Holland, 1995, p. 102)

This description may be extended to the language observers employ to characterize governmental responses to commission reports.

Deal (1995) puts an interesting perspective on the functions of a commission. Picking up on the notion that (American) commissions, summits, and task forces have such a spotty record in policy reform, this author suggests that commissions are a form of modern myth-making and rituals that symbolically reflect:

our faith in expertise and rational problem-solving. It is our way of summoning the power of reason. Through reason, scientific knowledge, and experts, we believe we can forge solutions that will either solve the problems or at least improve the situation some what. But we also add modern epilogue to the ancient symbolic drama. While the healing dance is valued mainly for its expression, the value of summits or commissions often rests more on the sensibleness of their recommendations. Such policy statements, grounded in the
latest research, are expected to be implemented at the local level so that the problems can be rectified. (p.121-122)

Deal (1995, pp. 126-127) asserts that a major impact of commissions is through "influencing", in ceremonial fashion, the revitalizing or reshaping "our values or beliefs about education," rather than having a direct impact on reform. "Beliefs then reaffirm or redirect our behavio[u]r."

Our faith in expertise and rational decision-making is particularly tested in the realm of educational policy with its unclear goals and uncertain technologies, contends Bjork (1995), citing March and Cohen (1974). The inherent ambiguity associated with systemic educational reforms:

makes rational decision processes in identifying, analysing, and solving problems difficult.
In these situations, people often create symbols to resolve confusion, increase predictability, and provide direction...as well as to convey meaning in circumstances where events, reports, and findings may remain meaningless. (Deal, 1995, p. 144)

Commissions in this perspective are akin to an act of faith.

Ginsburg and Plank (1995, p.8) note four major themes in recent American commissions on education: the durability of commissions as a policy vehicle; the generalized nature of recommendations; the lack of attention to implementation issues; and despite the popularity of reports, the lack of their impact on the classroom. In other words, despite the sound and fury of commission rhetoric, the linkage from analysis and exhortation to practice is tenuous at best. Bjork (1995) categorizes American commission reports from the 1980s in terms of three successive waves of educational reforms, each with its own emphases, moving from accountability-related and quality issues, to professional, structural and equity issues, and finally to more child-centred themes.

During the 1980s two contextual issues, economic and social, emerged in the United States (Bjork, 1995), and Canada (Manzer, 1994; Paquette, 1995), to influence the way that schools are perceived as public instruments. The first of the these contextual issues concerns the role of education in relation to the economy. One side of this debate posits a causal linkage between "education failure and economic decline", that schools are failing to provide adequate "social capital" for the wider needs of society. The other side portrays the first argument as "scapegoating" schools, and points to other factors for imputed economic decline, including:

government spending, high interest rates, inadequate capital formation, the use of capital assets for corporate mergers and acquisitions, limited capital investment in new plans and
equipment, low investment in research and development, declining public infrastructure, inadequate investment in training people (human capital), and poor business management decisions, rather than low student test scores. (Bjork, 1995, p. 137)

The social context of schools has also raised the issue of what purposes schools should serve. This perspective suggests that the deterioration of the social fabric is undermining schools, and that changes in the racial and ethnic composition of society are making new demands on schools that are only partially addressed, if at all, by a diverse group of policy makers. "Some argue that the nation's economic and social policies have to be welded into a 'double helix bond'...before any real educational or economic progress can be achieved" (Bjork, 1995, pp. 138-139). In other words, the locus for addressing many new challenges faced by schools lies outside the grasp of schools to address, unless a wider effort is made to improve the social and economic lot of the changing population that has no other option than the public schooling of its children.

CANADIAN ROYAL COMMISSIONS AND POLICY DOCUMENTS ON EDUCATION

In Canada, because of the division of powers in the Constitution Act 1867, education is a provincial right and the vast majority of the post-Confederation governmental inquiries into education have been at the provincial level. On the other hand, a few federal royal commissions did address educational issues from a national perspective, including the 1910 Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education, the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (1949-1951), and the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1963-1970) (Goulson, 1981, p. xv).

Goulson (1981, p. xv-xiii) surveyed 367 major inquiries into Canadian education from 1787 to 1978. These have included "investigations into education generally, into certain aspects of education in particular, and into other matters that were of significance to education in some ways." Of the 367 inquiries, 127 can be considered royal commissions issued in the name of the Crown under a Great Seal, with powers authorized by public inquiries acts or by special acts, as was the case with the later Ontario Royal Commission on Learning. Some of these royal commissions had general educational significance, and some were of a judicial nature, appointed to investigate a person or incident. Ontario had 79 educational inquiries of different types during this period.
Without the designation "royal", a large group of 158 departmental, task forces, and other governmental committees surveyed were very similar in power and scope to royal commissions, and some were appointed under authority of a sub-section of a public inquiries act. If a Minister of Education (or other departmental minister) did the appointing rather than a Lieutenant Governor in Council, and if the report was returned to the Minister, then the instrument was designated a departmental committee or "commission" rather than a royal commission, as was the case with the Ontario's Hall-Dennis Committee.

Despite education being primarily a provincial matter, provinces share salient contextual factors that impact on a regional or national basis. Many of the major problems faced by one province may be operative in another demanding some form of policy rededication, and "looking over one's shoulder" to see how others are tackling issues can promote policy-relevant learning. Assorted problems in vision, governance, curriculum, finance, school organization, standards, and teacher education are not solved by commissions or policy-advice or formulation-bodies for once and all time, but are reattended to over the decades, as the contexts of public education change. But newer contexts also bring newer problems to light.

In the following section I briefly summarize the findings of some of these commissions and notable policy documents that describe in greater detail the national educational policy context of the last decade. A perusal of these topics is fundamental to understanding the issues presented to, and deliberated by, the Ontario Royal Commission on Learning.

Manzer (1994) offers a recent and comprehensive analysis of the normative content and of royal commissions on education as policy instruments in Canada. Explicitly he addresses the "political ideas and beliefs that appear to underlie educational policies and give them meaning...(p. 3)." After reviewing various commissions' substantial impacts on educational policy across Canada, Manzer concludes that commissions are largely reflective of competitive branches of liberalism: ethical liberalism, with an emphasis on "person-regarding" education, and technological liberalism, which, boldly stated, seeks to gear the agenda of education to suit the needs and value systems of the business community.

Manzer (1994) situates the debate on educational ideology in the larger context of conflicting perceptions about the public interest and nature of a good community:

...Educational politics are rent by conflicting political, economic and cultural interests which seek to organize schools to represent particular conceptions of a good community and a good life and to teach knowledge and skills serving particular interests, or at least
particular conceptions of the public interest (p.3).

The categories and detail in this section are primarily from Manzer (1994) and include: educational purpose and problems in the global economy; educational outcomes as policy problems; social diversity and common education; principles of curriculum design and school organization; content-oriented versus child-centred education; program differentiation and educational transitions; educational performance and accountability; policy-making authority and provincial common curriculum; educational policy communities as stakeholder partnerships; and revisionist ideological consensus and educational principles. As foreground to RCOL, some elaboration of his ideas are in order, for two basic reasons. These topics are the stuff of much of the internal debates that I feature in this dissertation, and this detail is necessary to provide a context. Secondly, an explicit task within RCOL was also ascertaining what recent commissions on education across the country had to say about some of the central issues that RCOL was also tackling, and an overview of them helps to understand what trends in thinking were apparent in Canadian royal commissions and policy documents as RCOLers began to map out their own understandings.

During the last decade, several influential policy pieces argued that schools played a key role in sustaining the needs of an increasingly globalized economy, and that:

the design of educational policies must give priority to the external pressures of an increasingly competitive global economy. Excessive emphasis on the goal of individual self-development, which characterized the orientation of person-regarding educational policies in the 1960s, eventually will prove destructive of both individual and collective well-being as Canadians grapple with the economic realities of the 1990s and beyond. (Manzer, 1994, p. 213)

Often cited as a source in the articulation of the nexus between schools and economic prosperity is the 1987 report by George Radwanski, former editor-in-chief of the Toronto Star, to the Ontario Ministry of Education, on the relevance of education and the issue of drop-outs. Radwanski, (1987) argued that in a knowledge-based global economy: "Education has long been recognized as an important contributor to economic growth, of course - but now it has become the paramount ingredient for competitive success in the world economy" (p. 11, cited in Manzer, 1994, p. 213). Two other Ontario reports amplified this theme. In its first report, Competing in the New Global Economy (1988), the Ontario Premier's Council similarly argued that a critical determinant of Ontario's ability to make the transition to a higher value-
added economy will be the education, skills, ingenuity, and adaptability of its workers. In its report issued in 1990, *People and Skills in the New Global Economy*, the Premier's Council then focussed on the role of the educational system, as well as issues of training in the workplace and adjustment of displaced workers. Education in the service of the economy was underscored as the primary goal of education: "Among the many goals the education system is designed to meet, maintaining and enhancing Ontario's competitiveness in the new global economy should figure prominently" (pp. 13-14, cited in Manzer, 1994, p. 214).

At the federal level, the Economic Council of Canada's 1992 report, *A Lot to Learn*, was written in a similar "do or die" vein: "To improve productivity, trade performance, and innovation - to improve the overall competitiveness of a firm, and industry, or an entire economy - one of the critical factors is the enhancement of human skills. Indeed, individually and collectively Canadians face a painful choice: develop skills or accept low wages" (p. 1, cited in Manzer, 1994, p. 215). In its 1992 report, New Brunswick's Commission on Excellence in Education also contended that the changing economic context required a renewed stress on the connection between educational and economic achievement, but that this tighter connection should not entail a diminution of the traditional goals of education (Manzer, 1994, p. 216).

Manzer (1994, p. 216) makes a connection between the notion of economic competitiveness and the rise in interest in "outputs or outcomes-based" education and the importance of assessment. What national or international testing was done in the first part of this decade did little to allay public fears about what was perceived to a decline in the state of public education. Both the Canadian Test of Basic Skills and a test conducted by Statistics Canada seemed to confirm suspicions about the lack of language and numeracy skills of too many recent school graduates. International tests of achievement in maths and science showed that, despite a positive beginning, by the end of secondary school the achievement scores of Canadians are well below the average level attained for industrial countries (Manzer, 1994, p. 217). The growing call for public accountability would thus entail strong demand for more vigorous, and centralized, measures of student performance.

According to Manzer (1994, p. 217), the new emphasis on global competitiveness and the role of the school creates demands that are not sympathetic to child- or individual-centred education, particularly in the context of social diversity. He cites British Columbia's Royal Commission on Education, the 1988
Sullivan Commission, as a notable exception to this new general trend. That Commission emphasized the need to balance both conceptions of schooling, viz., "that schools and school curricula should be diverse enough to allow for individual interests, abilities, and differences, but the expression of such choice and diversity should not lead to social fragmentation" (p. 95, cited in Manzer, 1994, p. 218). Ontario's Radwanski report, on the other hand, argued that there is "only one kind of meaningful general education that is relevant to the needs of society and of the economy, and of the economy...Our challenge is to define the necessary content of that education and to bring it into effect for all" (p. 39, cited in Manzer, 1994, p. 218). Positions with the same logic as Radwanski's were used to justify the need for a common education in New Brunswick's Commission on Excellence in Education (1991) that virtually ignored the bilingual nature of the province. The same sort of language appears in the recommendations of the Newfoundland and Labrador Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Delivery of Programs and Services in Primary, Elementary, Secondary Education (the Williams Commission, 1992) that sought to transform a confessional school system into an "interdenominational" one (Manzer, 1994, pp. 219-220; Cody, 1994).

In the latter part of the 1980s and early 1990s the trend in pedagogy and school organization was towards a "common curriculum", with language, mathematics and natural sciences as "core" or foundational subjects at elementary and secondary levels (Manzer, 1994, p. 220). Serious debate continued about just what should constitute the common denominator of this core or what conception of basic knowledge and skills would emerge as dominant. A corollary of this debate was the question of whether this common curriculum should be arrayed in a traditional, subject-orientation (Radwanski), integrated (classically-defined in Hall-Dennis), or a combination of both systems (Sullivan). Also part of this debate was the question of whether the content of the curriculum should be defined by a general liberal arts orientation on what is learned (Radwanski, Sullivan) or by an emphasis on how to learn through a hierarchy of skills approach (Ontario Premier's Council, 1990; the Williams Commission) with the emphasis on the acquisition of "motor skills, mathematical literacy, reading and writing ability, capacity to learn, and interactive communication skills" (Manzer, 1994, p. 221).

Once the general orientation of the curriculum has been decided upon, the question of differences among children and how schools should accommodate them is the next problem to address. Two different approaches generally characterize this debate: the content approach with the emphasis on a specified body
of knowledge and skills that the student should learn at specific stages of development, and the child-centred approach that emphasizes that "differences among young people in their needs, abilities, and interests should by taken into account" (Manzer, 1994, p. 222). If differences among learners are an important starting point, then valuing, and working with, what the learner brings in knowledge and experience to the classroom is a logical next step. A third aspect of child-centred education is the idea that knowledge is as much, or more, a process of discovery by the learner of knowledge that is relevant to that individual, as the imparting of a relatively-standardized body of knowledge in which the teacher is the primary mover. Thus a child-centred, process-oriented, relevance-based approach is often contrasted with a teacher-centred, content-based understanding of curriculum issues.

In the Ontario context, in particular, the debate about the merits, or lack thereof, of the child-centred approach heated up in the 1980s, as witnessed by the sarcasm in Radwanski's attack upon the legacy of Hall-Dennis and the notion of educational relevance:

That report faithfully mirrored the flower-child, do-your-own-thing outlook of the 1960s in its belief that a relevant education was one in which content was of secondary importance and that the acquisition of specific knowledge should be subordinated to more abstract goals of individual self-fulfilment and self-esteem. But relevance is a moving target. Whether or not that view was ever valid, today it is dangerously outdated. (p. 2, cited in Manzer, 1994, p. 223).

B.C.'s Sullivan Report, of all major reports of this period, is the most unabashedly child-centred: "Teachers and schools must recognize the wide range that exists in students' abilities, interests, ambitions, beliefs, attitudes, and values. Curriculum must respond to it by providing greater variety and choice" (p. 79, cited in Manzer, 1994, p. 223). Sullivan's recommendations for a primary educational system with continuous student progress, an integrated curriculum, ungraded primary schools, and de-emphasising the competitive aspects of schooling, all fit well into the tenets of child-centred education. The era's royal commissions elsewhere were less enthusiastic in their embrace of such ideas, and the reports of New Brunswick and Newfoundland stressed balancing individual needs with those of the community and the desirability of meshing of educational outcomes with the needs of technological society (Manzer, 1994, pp. 223-224).

Recent official policy studies of public education in Canada may have settled on the advisability of a common curriculum at the elementary level and on the need of a core curriculum from kindergarten
to grade 12, but a thornier issue, still unresolved, concerned transition points, (de)streaming, and differentiated programming for various levels of difficulty at the secondary level. Radwanski favoured a common secondary education, disparaging the credit system dominant for two decades in Ontario as full of holes. Less individual choice and more commonality of curriculum were seen as the antidotes. The idea of an essential common secondary education for all students was also supported by the New Brunswick Landry-Downey Commission and the Williams Commission in Newfoundland. The core in all cases was defined as language arts, mathematics, and the sciences (Manzer, 1994, p. 224).

Accountability "refers to those who have been given, or must take, responsibility for ensuring that young people have acquired the requisite knowledge and skills during their elementary and secondary education" (Manzer, 1994, p. 227). Accountability emerged as a major theme of educational policy studies in the 1980s and 1990s. In Ontario in particular, public demand grew for the imposition of some form of publicly-visible means of testing and assessment, a capacity that had fallen out of favour after provincially-set graduation exams were abolished in 1967 and assessment and testing became largely board- and school-controlled.

Radwanski, seconded by the New Brunswick Royal Commission on Excellence in Education and Newfoundland's Williams Commission, favoured standardized, external testing and assessment as essential components of accountability. Radwanski recommended standardized tests every two years in elementary school in reading comprehension; writing, including grammar, spelling, and punctuation; mathematics; reasoning and problem-solving; and learning skills. He also recommended that in high schools all students should continue to be tested in these same content areas, and preferably in the other subjects of the core curriculum as well (Manzer, 1994, pp. 228-229).

A corollary of centralized assessment is the centralization of policy development or at least a strong leadership role of the ministry in defining curriculum content and standards. Over the last two decades, Ontario, more than any other province, had pursued a decentralized approach in this area, allowing school boards to define curriculum details and standards. Radwanski argued for greater centralization and standardization, contending that students' needs for basic knowledge and skills do not vary significantly across the province.

While supporting the need for a strong ministry role in curriculum and standard-setting, Sullivan recommended a continuance of British Columbia's tri-level system, and, critical of excessive provincial
authority, urged the creation of a provincial educational advisory council and a provincial curriculum committee. It would include representatives of the trustees' association, teachers' federation, parents, business, and labour.

Landry and Downey in New Brunswick recommended that educational policy-making in that province should remain strongly centralized, but also contended that the provincial educational community ought to be more diversified, with greater consultation from the stakeholders. The model of educational governance advocated by the Williams Commission was described as "integrated decentralization" which posited a leadership role for the Department of Education in defining the legal framework, setting goals and standards, evaluating effectiveness, resourcing, and addressing provincial concerns (Manzer, 1994, pp. 230-232).

The renewed involvement of outside stakeholders in defining educational goals and standards was also a product of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The primary beneficiary of this involvement was the business community, emulating their counterparts in Germany and Japan who took an active interest in articulating the needs of the corporate sector and the role of public education in providing skilled and knowledgeable workers. This conception of a greater role for the corporate sector in shaping public education was articulated in the work of the federal Economic Council of Canada, the Ontario Premier's Council, and various Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade throughout the country (Manzer, 1994, pp. 233-235).

Manzer (1994, pp. 235-237) claims that the various official studies of the late 1980s and early 1990s were by "no means identical in their ideological commitments" to educational liberalism, with the Sullivan Commission report and the Radwanski report framing the conflicting preferences of the period. "Despite these ideological differences", Manzer (p. 236-237) continues, "recent official policy studies have substantially agreed on six basic principles of educational purpose, policy, and governance": 1) Educational policy must be redesigned to take account of the emergence of a global economy driven by technological change and international competition. 2) The purpose of elementary and secondary education is acquisition of basic knowledge and skills. Official policy studies have differed in their definitions of basic knowledge and skills, but they all agree on the need for a common or core curriculum that would occupy persons in elementary and secondary education for most of their time in school. 3) Restricting cultural pluralism in public education does require consideration of legitimate expectations
about the protection and promotion of social diversity in educational institutions and curricula, but the cultural pluralism that characterized the policies of person-regarding education cannot be sustained against the imperatives of technological society and global economy. 4) Public accountability must be restored to educational governance and the functions of policy and administration clearly divided between provincial and local education authorities. 5) The public problems of education are best described and measured by the results of educational policies rather than allocations of public resources to educational activities or intrinsic properties of educational processes. Directly measuring and comparing the levels of knowledge and skills attained by young people during their schooling is the only way to get the information necessary to evaluate accountability. 6) The policy-making community, which was typical of the era of person-regarding education and policy interdependence of the 1960s and 1970s, should be extended beyond professional educational interests to incorporate important societal interests, especially organized business and labour. In particular, institutionalized educational partnerships between government and business are essential to refit public education for the new era of global economic competition.

Manzer contends that these principles cumulatively represent a shift in direction in Canadian educational ideology:

Despite some overlapping and inconsistencies, the set of common policy principles articulated in official studies of the late 1980s and early 1990s represents a significant shift away from the ethical liberal ideology that guided official policy studies of the late 1960s and early 1970s. This agreement on common policy principles has generated in turn a range of policy recommendations in recent official policy studies that, taken together, set a powerful agenda for educational reform. (Manzer, 1994, p. 237).

While the agenda for educational reform may have been given substance by policy documents and the work of various royal commissions, educational politics managed to deflect or distort some of the more notable attempts at reform. For example, some of the more child-centred initiatives of British Columbia's Sullivan Commission, as translated in the 1989 Year 2000 Plan, were withdrawn or substantially amended by subsequent Social Credit and NDP governments, and by 1993 much of its substance had been eviscerated in the face of public criticism (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 1996). The federal Conservative government had by 1992 retreated from claiming a leading role in national education and training, even to the extent of abolishing the organization that had played a key part in articulating this
role, the Economic Council of Canada. In the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, a vigorous debate over the development of a national testing program ended with a compromise between standardized national and curriculum-based provincial test items, with Ontario (initially) and Saskatchewan not willing to take part. Only in Alberta and New Brunswick, notes Manzer, did governments make commitments and move decisively to implement the agenda of content-oriented education (Manzer, 1994, p. 238-246).

Manzer's accounting of an Ontario legislative committee that discussed the Radwanski report is insightful not only of the increasing nastiness of this debate, but also as a foreshadowing of the vehemence of the argumentation that would later take place in the hearings and internal discussions of Ontario's Royal Commission on Learning:

In the legislative committee hearings that followed the publication of the Radwanski report in Ontario, revisionist economic liberals, who wanted schools to produce graduates trained for the new global economy, were opposed by diehard ethical liberals, who wanted schools to stress the growth of students as individuals. As one astute observer put it: "One side invoked nightmarish visions of schools as assembly lines, producing human widgets for the economy; the other foresaw armies of pseudo-philosophers attempting to discuss that state of humanity but unable to read or write." In his appearance before the committee, Lloyd Dennis [of Hall-Dennis] said Radwanski's approach graded children "like eggs". Radwanski replied that Dennis's approach left students "floundering around in intellectual mush". The alignment of opposing interests was clear: on one side, representatives of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Retail Council of Canada, and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business advocated a return to provincial standardized testing; on the other side, representatives of teachers' unions and trustees' associations criticized Radwanski's proposal to end streaming. (Manzer, 1994, p. 239)

In its subsequent report the legislative committee dismissed much of Radwanski, endorsing the existing goals of education in Ontario with their underlying theme of "helping each student towards individual self-actualization and development", and recommended only incremental adjustments to the existing organization, except for destreaming of grade nine. In September 1992 the Minister of Education in the NDP government (Tony Silipo) confirmed that beginning in September 1993 grade 9 students would no longer be streamed into basic, general, and advanced courses. In addition, the grade 9 curriculum would be converted from credit courses in conventional subjects to integrated studies in four areas: language, the arts, self and society, and mathematics, science, and technology. This ministerial action failed to placate important stakeholders, as the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation led the charge in
demanding the resignation of Minister Solipo, whose portfolio Dave Cooke was soon to take over in early 1993.

RCOL's PREDECESSORS

The two major Ontario reports on education that preceded RCOL both met with controversial ends. The Hope Commission (1950) was consigned to the storage closet by Premier George Drew, and the Hall-Dennis Committee report (1968) was implemented in a fashion that still rankles the chief author of Living and Learning, Lloyd Dennis, to this day (Manzer, 1994). Despite the alleged disjointedness between the spirit of Hall-Dennis and the various reforms that were implemented, Manzer's work would tend to confirm that Hall-Dennis still stands today as the pr"imal symbol of a shift to progressive child-centeredness as the dominant educational ideology accepted, with modifications, by major inside stakeholders in Ontario in the wake of that Committee's adjournment in 1968.

The Hall-Dennis Report, Living and Learning, was released in 1968 after three years of study. A clear break from any educational studies in Canada that had preceded it, Living and Learning stressed the need to modernize the education system so that it would be able to address the needs of both the student as an individual and of society as a whole. Among its 258 recommendations steeped in a progressive, learner-centred educational philosophy, were the calls for a 'relevant' curriculum that more closely matched students' experiences; a decrease in rote learning; a more facilitative role for teachers, replacing the traditional teacher-centred "chalk and talk" approach; moving from knowledge transfer to engage students in a process of discovery; less emphasis on paper and pencil testing; new forms of class organization such as small group work and learning activities that stress individualization of learning experiences; and a more decentralized decision making system, with an increase in parental and community involvement in the schools.

The expressed rationale for RCOL was as a response to increasing concern among educators, members of the public, and the government of Ontario about the state and future direction of publicly-funded education in Ontario. Commenting on his government's move to establish the Commission, Premier Bob Rae observed that public education in Ontario had become an ideological battleground and as a result the public debate about education had gone awry: "We've been bedevilled by the notion...that it is unprogressive to talk about standards in the sense of literacy, numeracy, and basic skills, and on the
other hand that somehow those arguments are elitist and right wing" (Globe and Mail, Apr. 29, 1993, p.A1.)

A Toronto Globe and Mail editorial in the wake of the release of RCOL's Report, Jan. 28, 1995, p. A22), expressed some of the public concerns about the state of public education:

The Hall-Dennis reforms made sense to many educators and parents. Even today few want a return to rote learning. By the 1980s, though, many were beginning to worry that the pupil had been throw[n] out with the bath water. Standards seemed to be falling, report cards were vague, testing was sporadic. Several international tests showed that Ontario students achieved only mediocre results in core subjects. Meanwhile, the costs of schooling had soared. By 1991, Canada was spending more on education than any other industrialized country except Sweden. Something had gone wrong with Canadian schools, and parents wanted action.

In short, in the face of an increasingly conflictive political context and growing public scepticism about the efficacy of publicly-funded education, RCOL was expected to present a detailed blue-print for educational reform to right the wrongs that many observers, rightly or wrongly, attributed to the influence of the last major review of public education undertaken a generation ago.

A SUMMARY OF RCOLS's RECOMMENDATIONS

One month later than the December 1994 deadline stipulated in the mandate, I chauffeured in a van the five commissioners and the executive director from RCOL headquarters on Bloor Street West to the Mowat Block of the Minister of Education and Training, at the corner of Bay Street and Wellesley Street West. There, they presented copies of the Report to the Minister, Dave Cooke, and his Deputy, Charles Pascal. On that morning of January 26, 1995, the Report was officially presented to the Ontario Government, and in the afternoon, commissioners explained their findings to key stakeholders and to the media assembled in the auditorium of Landsdowne School in downtown Toronto. In four colour-coded volumes the Report addressed "mandate, context, and issues", "learning: our vision for schools", "the educators", and "making it happen". Its title, For the Love of Learning, suggested by Bharti, was chosen by commissioners in a mini-contest of very short duration within RCOL. Its message is reflective of the commissioners' finding that the main purpose of Ontario schooling should be focussed on learning and teaching, with re-defined primary and shared responsibilities of schools, and with schools that would foster learning and thinking skills, in a process of intellectual development, to equip students for the
challenges of the twenty-first century. As Caplan expressed it on that clear and crisp day in January:

Our bottom line is that we want the vast majority of students to complete high school as literate, knowledgeable, creative, and committed young men and women. Our recommendations are geared to ensuring that they know how to solve problems and think logically and critically. They will be able to communicate articulately, work cooperatively, and most importantly, will have learned how to learn. All our recommendations are designed to help every Ontario student reach this goal. But we have a long way to go (Crosbie, 1995, p.1).

In order to mobilize school reform efforts, the Report adopts "two tiers" of recommendations: the first four are "engines" that will drive the process of change, contending that "conventional" reform methods were insufficient, while the second tier contains specific recommendations for improving various aspects of the system (Crosbie, p.1).

The four engines

1. Teacher Professionalization and Development - Recognizing that teachers "must have greater support in playing their vital and difficult roles" (Crosbie p.2), the Commission recommended that teacher preparation be extended from one to two years, and that professional development be made mandatory. A College of Teachers should be established as an independent professional body to determine professional standards and for certifying and recertifying teachers and for accrediting teacher education programs.

2. Community Alliances - "Overburdened teachers can't be as effective as they need to be with their primary role: enhancing students' intellectual competence. Community resources--parents, community organizations, social agencies, businesses and unions, religious, cultural and athletic groups--must share the non-academic tasks" (Crosbie, p.2). The Commission recommended that every school create a school-community council, with staff, parents, students and community representatives, to link to school and community, and at the provincial level that the provincial government reform policy and programs for children, to promote better coordination of policies.

3. Early Childhood Education - Contending that "early learning can positively affect a child's success in school" (Crosbie, p. 2), the Commission recommended that the province offer school readiness programs for all three-year-olds whose parents wish to enroll them.

4. Information Technology - "In a world where computer literacy is becoming as essential as print
literacy, information technology offers boundless promise" (Crosbie, p.2). The Commission recommended that government and business cooperate to provide schools with network links and appropriate technological resources.

Other major recommendations were developed with a central question in mind: will the recommendation improve teaching and learning? These findings span, and sometimes overlap, the following areas: governance; curriculum, standards, testing and reporting; Ontario's diverse communities; funding; schools and the business community; and implementation.

**Governance.** The recommendations made were designed "to improve the balance of power and decision-making in the system" (Crosbie, p.3). The commissioners said that students and teachers should have more say in how schools are run and that principals should have more control over the budget and staffing. More should be done to welcome parents to help support their children's learning, and a Parents' Charter of Rights and Responsibilities should be created to clarify school-community roles. School Councils should be established at each school to include broad representation of parents and members of the local community. Students should have a similar Charter. A voting secondary school student should be on every school board. Schools should seek systematic input from students, and a provincial Student and Youth Advisory Council should be established. The role of the school boards in governance was reaffirmed as translators of ministry policy, and trustees' role defined as policy-makers, not to be involved in school operations. All trustees should be part-time, with a maximum honorarium of $20,000 per year. The Metropolitan Toronto School Board should be phased out when responsibility for determination of funding is shifted to the province.

The Ministry's role is defined as providing a clear central direction, establishing a common curriculum, standards, and outcomes, and assuring equitable funding to ensure comparable services for students in whatever component of the system. The Ministry should share power with the Ontario College of Teachers and the Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability. This Office should report to the Legislature as the watchdog for system performance; be responsible for province-wide uniform assessments in Grades 3 and 11; develop indicators of system performance for boards and the province; and develop guidelines for content of annual reports of boards and Ministry.

**Curriculum.** "Students should be schooled in the 'old basics' of reading, writing and mathematics, but history, geography, science, literature, the arts and technology have a place as well...and the 'new
basics' such as problem solving, technology, coping skills and teamwork... and community and cooperative education...[and] smaller schools or schools within schools" should be created, with a higher profile given to teacher advisers to monitor student progress (Crosbie, p.3). Citing the need for the effective use of resources, the Commission recommended that the development of curriculum materials and subject content be coordinated by the Ministry, with appropriate inputs of expertise from other sources.

Also recommended: continuance of the common core curriculum for Grades 1 through 9 and of destreaming for Grades 1 to 9, with specialization from Grades 10 to 12, and a local option for 10 percent of instructional time in Grades 1 through 9. For secondary curriculum, the Commission recommended: two types of courses for Grades 10 through 12: Ontario Academic Courses with an academic emphasis and Ontario Applied Courses with an emphasis on applied skills and knowledge, as well as common courses in some subjects; graduation outcomes to be developed for the end of Grade 12 for all courses; diploma requirements to include physical exercise and community service; universities and colleges to review their admission requirements to select these new courses; that all courses in which a student has enrolled be recorded on his or her transcript; and phasing out Grade 13, with specialization completed within three years after Grade 9, with the savings applied to offset some costs of early childhood education.

Standards, Testing and Reporting. "Both parents and the public want clear information about how Ontario's students are doing and how well the school system is operating. Teachers, schools, school boards and the Ministry: all are accountable to students, parents and taxpayers" (Crosbie, p.3). To this end the Commission recommended a common, easy-to-understand report card to be prepared by the Ministry. Students should be assessed by the Ministry and school boards, with province-wide assessments at the end of Grade 3 (one for literacy, one for numeracy) and a universal literacy test in Grade 11, with schools committed to offer a literacy guarantee—that any high school graduate can read and write at an appropriate level.

Ontario's Diverse Communities. "The Commission recognizes and values the diversity of Ontario. The commissioners have addressed the rights and needs of Roman Catholics, francophones and First Nations people, and of religious, language, and ethnic minorities" (Crosbie, p. 4). For Roman Catholics, there are recommendations about maintaining the preferential hiring of Catholic teachers; to be better
served by teacher preparation programs; and representation from the Roman Catholic education system at all levels of MET.

The Commission recommended support for recent anti-racism initiatives of the Ministry regarding bias-free curricula and inclusive teaching practices; school boards should pay particular attention to improving achievement for minority students; teacher admissions should better represent Ontario demographics; and innovative programs should be set up to meet the special needs of a particular group, as identified by a community. For French-language schools, the Commissioners recommended: the Ministry should implement school governance by and for francophones; funding for accelerated language retrieval programs and for "animation culturelle"; the development of uniform criteria for admission of students not having Charter rights to French-language education; and the phasing in of early childhood education programs. The Commission also recommended support for aboriginal control of educational governance; the inclusion of aboriginal history, culture, and contributions to Canadian society in the general curriculum; the development of guidelines for the use of Native languages in the classroom; better coordination of federal and provincial education policies; and the enhancement of distance education initiatives. For students with special needs, the Commission recommended: the integration of students into regular classrooms, with in-class support; a range of other placements available as necessary; earlier intervention for students with difficulties; acceleration as another option for gifted students; and simpler processes of placing students in appropriate programs along with more frequent review of placement.

Funding. "Excellent education for all learners cannot become reality without radical changes in the way education is funded in Ontario" (Crosbie, p.4). To this end, the Commission recommended that the province be responsible for centrally-determined funding to school boards, to ensure equity for students, especially those in French-language and Roman Catholic schools, with local boards supplementing this amount by drawing on the residential property tax base, but not exceeding the amount established by the province by more than 10 percent. Also recommended: all residential property owners required to direct their taxes to the school system they wish to support; and undirected taxes pooled and distributed on a per-pupil basis.

Schools and The Business Community. The Commission recommended: family-friendly workplace policies to facilitate parental involvement in schools; participation in school community councils; business to work with government in providing technology to schools; and business encouraged to expand its
participation in cooperative education programs.

**Implementation.** The Commission recommended that the government establish an autonomous implementation committee to oversee action on the recommendations.

With the handing over of the Report, RCOL was no more, except for the hasty distribution of the Report to stakeholders, the closing of the headquarters at 101 Bloor Street West, and various public appearances by commissioners in support of the Report.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

In Chapter Two I have presented multiple perspectives from the literature on commissions of inquiry as multiple-purpose public instruments, as constructors of knowledge, and as organizations; on American commissions on education; on Canadian commissions and notable policy documents on education; on other major issues in Canadian education; and on a summary of RCOL recommendations.

In the next chapter I present and analyze the findings on the composition of RCOL, the various contexts with which the Commission had to reckon, and the mandate the Government had assigned it.
CHAPTER 3 - COMPOSITION AND CONTEXTS

In Chapter 3 I examine the composition of the Commission, the role that political ideologies and biases played within RCOL, and the types of contexts that surrounded RCOL and played some role in the shape of internal deliberations and in the writing of the Report.

COMPOSITION

Let me introduce you to the people of the Royal Commission on Learning (RCOL), with a little step back in time. This "public instrument" was my place of work and study for eighteen months and there I got to know the people, in varying degrees in a professional capacity, who made the Commission tick.

For the thousands of people who attended the public hearings in 27 different venues during the fall and winter of 1993, who watched the proceedings or saw the commissioners on television, or who followed the extensive media coverage in this period, RCOL was a travelling road show, with the five Commissioners as headliners. This was RCOL's public face, the initial image most often projected in the media. The private face is what concerns us now, in this thumbnail sketch of RCOL's home base and of individuals who worked there in 1994.

Headquarters for RCOL for its duration were eighteen offices of varying size and two conference rooms, occupying one-half of the thirteenth floor at 101 Bloor Street West in Toronto, the property of Cadillac Fairview, which houses a number of commercial and provincial government offices. With its eastern edge bordered by St. Thomas Street, 101 is on the classy section of the south side of Bloor Street West, and its ground floor features Cole Haan (designer shoes and fashion accessories, several hundred dollars an item) and Les Must de Cartier and Royal de Versailles (watches and jewellery in the three-to-six figure range).

Across the street from 101 are the derelict remains of the University cinema, where workmen are busy erecting a facade of brick to hide a parking lot, also under construction. In front of the facade, vendors hawk their motley collections of jewellery and clothing, and street people solicit spare change. There, on most days, rain, snow, or sunshine, an old bearded man sits on a milk crate and plays "Greenfields" and other folk tunes on a recorder, or in his place, a saxophonist belts out jazzy melodies,
both playing for their supper. Today, their tunes miraculously waft above the din of the traffic and penetrate the smoky glass windows of the conference room facing on Bloor where commissioners and researchers wrestle with the task at hand. A couple of winters later, I recognize the face of the player of Greenfields from a photo in a newspaper report on how he froze to death in a bus shelter on Spadina Avenue. His name was Fred. Just to the south of 101 is the former Windsor Arms Hotel, once the darling of the rich and famous, now closed for years and decaying, neglected by the Japanese investors whose development plans have gone awry. Adjacent property owners had successfully petitioned city officials to scuttle plans for yet another high-rise development in the area; in 1996, more than a year after RCOL had folded its own tent, the ground was broken for a more modest, but high-priced condominium project on the site of the now gutted Windsor Arms.

This cheek-by-jowl juxtaposition of poverty, stagnation, and over-the-top wealth suggests, perhaps, an apt metaphor for a troubling social and economic environment that framed much of what the commissioners saw and heard during their inquiry.

Now let us enter 101 Bloor Street West on this crisp day in March 1994, and ride the elevator to the thirteenth floor. As we leave the elevator we see a sign directing us to the right for RCOL. The first RCOLer to greet us is Melanie Hoskins, the receptionist. The fluently bilingual Ms. Hoskins, who hails from the anglophone side of Quebec, is a former teacher and now an aspiring actress with the air of a young Katherine Hepburn. She is seated behind a crescent-shaped black desk and typing a note on specially-designed RCOL stationery; behind her is the larger of the two conference rooms on the east side of the building, rarely used by RCOLers because of complaints that it is either too cold or warm. These conference rooms would also serve as communal lunch rooms when Chinese food would be ordered in for commissioners and researchers during marathon sessions. Adjoining this conference room at both ends are the spacious offices of the two co-chairs, both equipped with private washrooms and showers. I was told by a veteran civil servant that the size and decor of government offices is directly related to one's rank in the civil bureaucracy, and the specifications of the co-chairs' offices are normally accorded to deputy ministers, right down to the square footage of carpet that such a status is permitted to enjoy.

Co-chair Gerry Caplan, a native of Toronto, on regular occasions occupies one of these spacious offices. Caplan's "bio" lists a range of pursuits indicative of a restless energy, including careers as an academic and educator, political and social activist, public policy analyst, and public affairs commentator.
He has a M.A. in Canadian history from the University of Toronto and a Ph.D in African history from the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. He has taught in the history departments at the University of Toronto, the University College of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), and at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (O.I.S.E.). He authored several books, as well as magazine and newspaper articles. His most recent book-length publication is a collection of opinion pieces he wrote for the Toronto Star, whose title reflects his commitment as an "unrepentant socialist". After leaving O.I.S.E. in 1977, Caplan became the Director of the CUSO program in Nigeria, which he followed with a stint as head of the Health Advocacy Unit of the City of Toronto. He then served as federal secretary of the New Democratic Party and national campaign manager for the 1984 election. After the election, he was appointed by the Mulroney government as co-chair of a federal task force on Canadian broadcasting policy. Before his appointment to RCOL in May 1993, Caplan concentrated on his public commentator role, authoring articles, opinion pieces, and appearing regularly on television (Report, Vol. 4, Appendix G). He continued in this role after leaving RCOL.

Caplan's office, in the southeast corner of 101, is ringed with books and reports about education. On the wall next to his computer are pinned a number of Gary Larson cartoons, a Mad Magazine flow chart satirizing the "Mcjobs" awaiting various types of school graduates, and a poem by an anonymous Holocaust survivor that pleads for the inculcation of human values in the education system, the text of which was inserted in the discussion of the hidden curriculum in the Short Version of the Report. On the door into his office is a poster that exclaims: "It takes a whole village to educate a child—an African proverb." This proverb is also a favourite saying of many presenters during the hearings. On the floor behind the desk are two light dumbbells that Caplan uses for exercise in between sessions in the conference room. In the first few months of 1994 I am without any office space, and am glad to accept Caplan's invitation to use his space when he is not in town.

Next to Caplan's office, in a much smaller office typical of most spaces on the floor, is commissioner Msgr. Dennis Murphy. Dennis Murphy is a Roman Catholic priest of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie and was ordained in 1960. He studied in North Bay, Toronto, Rome, Brussels, and Ottawa, receiving his Ph.D in education from the University of Ottawa in 1971. Msgr. Murphy has served in his diocese as a parish priest, Chancellor, and Director of Religious Education. He was also a lecturer in religious studies at Laurentian University. At the national level, from 1967–70, he was the director of the
National Office for Religious Education, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, and from 1977–84 he was general secretary of the Conference of Bishops. In 1986 he founded the Institute for Catholic Education in Toronto, and for several years was the its first executive director. In 1977 Dennis Murphy was elected to the Nipissing District Roman Catholic Separate School Board, and served for a brief period. He was also chaplain of the Ontario Separate School Trustees Association from 1967–1985, and the chaplain of the Canadian Catholic School Trustees' Association from 1971–77. Throughout his career, he has also served on many boards, including the North Bay Crisis Centre, the Metropolitan Toronto Catholic Children's Aid Society, St. Joseph's Hospital in North Bay, and the University of St. Jerome's College in Kitchener (Report, Vol. 4, Appendix G). Upon leaving RCOL, Murphy assumed a position with the Ontario Separate School Board Trustees Association in Toronto.

Next to Murphy's office we find Manisha Bharti, the first student ever to serve as a commissioner on a royal commission in Canada. A graduate of St. Lawrence High School in Cornwall, she left RCOL in the fall of 1994 to study at Harvard University, but managed to keep connected to the evolution of the Report through E-mail. Academically, she was a gold award winner, with an average of 90 percent or more in her secondary school courses. In the Waterloo University Mathematics Contests, Manisha finished in the top eight percent of Ontario. Throughout high school, she was a member of her school's SchoolReach and Canada Quiz Academic Teams. She spent one summer involved in biological research at the University of Guelph and, upon graduation, she was awarded the Governor General's medal of distinction. Manisha was extremely active in a variety of high school activities, including the school environmental club, the school spirit club, and the student leaders organizing committee. She was the Student Council president, chair of the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry County (SD&G) Inter-School Student Council, and Eastern South Region vice-president of the OSSSA -- the Ontario Secondary School Students Association. Manisha was also a representative on the SD&G County Board of Education Race Relations and Ethnocultural Equity Committee as well as being involved with the board's Environmental and Vision 2000 Steering Committees. Manisha has also been active in the broader community, volunteering with the Cornwall Alzheimer Association and the Cornwall Environment Resource Centre. She is a past president of OCTAGON, the Optimist Youth Service Club, and she volunteered at the Hotel Dieu Hospital. In addition to all this activity, Manisha attended a number of youth-related conferences and travelled extensively (Report, Vol. 4, Appendix G).
To Bharti's west is the office of commissioner Avis Glaze. Glaze taught in secondary school and Teachers' College in Jamaica before applying to the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education to pursue postgraduate studies. There she completed master's programs in the areas of educational administration, guidance and counselling, and additional courses in special education, curriculum, measurement and evaluation, and educational psychology. She completed her doctorate in 1979. Glaze has taught at all levels of education — elementary, secondary, community college, teachers' college, and university — and has been a superintendent of schools in both the separate and public school systems. As well, she serves as a member of the Board of Governors of Humber College of Applied Arts and Technology, and as a member of the Senate of York University. Dr. Glaze has won awards for her outstanding contribution to education. In 1983, Dr. Glaze was seconded to the Curriculum Branch of the Ministry of Education as an education officer. She also served as a research co-ordinator with the Ontario Women's Directorate and has worked with both the Ontario and Canadian Advisory Councils on the Status of Women. She is called upon frequently to present at major conferences, to conduct professional development sessions with teachers and workshops with parents and students. Her most recent community involvement is with the Harry Gairey Scholarship Fund for promising black scholars. During RCOL's tenure Glaze was also a working superintendent of education with the North York Board and a course director in the Faculty of Education of York University. Upon leaving RCOL, she accepted a superintendency specializing in professional development with the York Region public school board.

To the west of Glaze is the office of researcher Burle Summers, seconded from the Ministry of Education and Training (MET), where he was formerly Director of Learning Assessment. Summers came to the Ministry after a distinguished career as an educator and Director of Education for the Hastings Board of Education, and is a provincially-known champion of moral education. At RCOL Summers is assigned the portfolios of accountability and assessment. In the fall of 1994 Summers retired to his farm near Belleville. Next to Summers' office we find researcher Brian McGowan, on loan from the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA). McGowan comes to RCOL in September 1993 specifically to work on the section of the Report about Catholic education issues, at the request of Murphy to OECTA, but he will also make large contributions to the sections on "Voices", "The Educators" and "Purpose." McGowan would return to OECTA in the fall of 1994. Sandwiched between Summers and McGowan is Mildred "Millie" Steadman, who has the unenviable task of keeping the
accounting records straight and cutting through bureaucratic red tape to ensure that the accounts of an organization on-the-fly get their due consideration and that all RCOLers get their cheques on time. Steadman returned to MET after RCOL.

We proceed next to the office of Suzanne Ziegler, the on-leave director of research for the Toronto Board of Education. Ziegler is largely responsible for the chapters on "What is Learning?" and on curriculum and assessment (Chapters 7-11), but will also play a strong role in the writing of other chapters. She retired from her position at the Toronto board in the fall of 1994. Next we meet Nancy Watson, a on-leave staffer at the Faculty of Education at the University of Toronto (FEUT), as well as a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Administration at O.I.S.E. Watson will contribute to almost every chapter in the Report, is one of the authors of the introductory chapters, and a main contributor to the chapters on "What is Teaching?", "Purposes", "The Educators", "Organizing Education: Power and Decision-making", and "Implementing the Reforms". Watson would return to FEUT in January 1995 as a researcher, and continue in this position after FEUT and O.I.S.E. were merged at the insistence of Minister Cooke in the first quarter of 1995. Both Ziegler and Watson had been personally picked as researchers, after Saturday morning interviews, by Bégin and Caplan.

In the south-west corner of the thirteenth floor we meet Selwynn Hicks, who on a contract-basis energetically promotes RCOL's youth outreach strategy, with much help from Bharti, Wayne Burnett, and a cast of dedicated student volunteers. We also see in an adjacent office Burnett himself, the researcher who contributes initially to the chapter on "Equity Considerations", but soon will find himself working on other chapters, including "Learning, Teaching, and Information Technology", "Community Education: Alliances for Learning", and "The Accountability of the System". Burnett is seconded to RCOL by the Ministry of Culture and Citizenship, to which he will return upon completion of his stint at RCOL. A former teacher, he holds a Master of Education degree in Adult Education from O.I.S.E. He had also been a contributor to Stephen Lewis's Report on Race Relations, released in 1993. Next on our tour is Michael Tansey, also seconded from the civil service bureaucracy, who along with "outside" consultant Diana Crosbie manages the media communications program for RCOL. After Tansey we visit Julie Lindhout, a researcher seconded from MET where she had been responsible for articulating policy issues and briefing cabinet ministers on educational initiatives. A former secondary school teacher of English and French, Lindhout brings to RCOL a wealth of knowledge about educational issues from the
school and board levels, and has intimate policy and political knowledge of the Ministry. She will be a main contributor to a number of chapters, including "Education and Society", "Evaluating Achievement", "Constitutional Issues", "Organizing Education: Power and Decision-Making", "Funding", and "The Accountability of The System". Nestled in the last office on our tour of the south-west side of 101 is Anne-Marie Caron-Réaume, a fluently bilingual francophone, seconded from MET, to assist on francophone issues. Both Lindhout and Réaume will return to MET after the decommissioning.

As we walk back up the hall from Caron-Réaume's office, we notice a large filing cabinet where well over a thousand briefs heard during hearings have been filed according to time and place, along with audiotapes in English and French, as well as the more than one thousand briefs that were mailed in. The analysis of briefs was helped by the efforts of Maureen Davis, who sits before a computer in the hallway inputting key data of written briefs. (This documentation is now housed in the provincial Archives on Grosvenor Street, just south of MET's Mowat Block in Toronto.)

Walking to the northern side of RCOL, we meet Monique Bégin, who like Caplan has surrounded herself with books and reports about education. As RCOL is short on support staff, Bégin has filed away most of a mountain of literature that she will consult, in a somewhat neater and systematic fashion than Caplan. On her door is the one cartoon that adorns her working space, a feminist one extolling the capabilities of women. A former teacher, she completed her M.A. in sociology at Université de Montréal and did doctoral studies at l'Université de Paris (Sorbonne), before working as a consultant in applied social sciences in Montréal. From 1967–70, she served as the executive secretary to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada and co-signed the report to Parliament. After two years as assistant director of research at the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission, she ran for Parliament as a Liberal. Re-elected four times (1972–84), Monique Bégin is best known as the first woman MP elected from Quebec to the House of Commons, and as minister of National Health and Welfare (1977–84). In that portfolio, she sponsored a range of legislation, including the Canada Health Act. Since September 1984, when she left politics, Monique Bégin has been a visiting professor at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, and McGill University in Montreal, before becoming the first holder of the joint Chair in Women's Studies at the University of Ottawa and Carleton University. In 1990 she was appointed dean of the new Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Ottawa, the position to which she returned in January 1995 (Report, Vol. 4, Appendix G).
Next to Monique's office is the work station of her francophone administrative assistant, Suzanne Tomosvary. Next are the offices of Naldrá Callender and Elizabeth Sinclair, who usually schedule presenters to hearings and word process all day long; Lucy Dotto and Basanti Singh provide additional administrative support. In charge of the administrative and logistical support for RCOL is Robert Graham, seconded from MET, who oversees all the details, big and small, for the hearings and for all the logistical steps that will lead to the publication of the Report, a process that will endure for many intensive months. The second largest office at RCOL is that of the executive director. This position was first filled by Jill Hutcheon, seconded by MET, from May 1993 to August 1993, when she returned to the Ministry in a new position as an assistant deputy minister. She is replaced by Rafaella (Raf) Di Cecco who will continue with RCOL until its disbanding in January 1995. Both Hutcheon and Di Cecco are career civil servants, and came to MET from other ministries. Breaking with a long MET tradition that distinguished it from the rest of the civil bureaucracy, both women do not come from a professional background in public education.

I usually occupy whatever empty office is available on a given day, juggling my observation role as a student and my participatory role, first as a "gofer" at the public hearings, then as an analyzer of briefs and opinion-giver in internal deliberations, and finally as an editor of, and (minor) contributor to the writing of the Report. Before enrolling in the Ph.D program in educational administration at OISE in 1992, I was an educator for a number of years in British Columbia, where I had been a principal of an elementary school and before that, a secondary school teacher of social studies.

Depending on the phase of the life cycle of RCOL, we would also meet a number of individuals who provide a diverse array of services to RCOL. Steven Fisher is a frequent visitor from MET, and trouble shoots computer problems. Well into 1994, as the deadline for the Report draws near, a contingent of people are brought in on a contract basis: design by the people of Public Good, translation from English to French by Francine Watkins, Gerard Godbout and QualiT, report production by project manager Patricia McCuaig, copy editor Dennis Mills, and Leslie Smart and Associates, and the CD-ROM version by "Mojo and Hunter". During the earlier hearings phase, we would also meet on the road a number of individuals from the Adcom Presentation Group who provided sound production and recorded the proceedings, and from Taschereau Vincent, who provided simultaneous translation (usually into French) at all 27 venues. One last character in the cast is Dr. Roberta Bondar, Canada's first woman
astronaut, who was appointed special advisor to RCOL on science matters. Early in the process, she met personally once with the commissioners, and also had a conference call with them on another occasion; thereafter she played no significant role in deliberations.

The above guided tour of RCOL helps provide a snapshot of the cast of players who contributed to the process. As a snapshot, however, it is more of a composite of various phases of RCOL, a collage or aggregation of individuals. Unlike more stable bureaucracies, RCOL only on rare occasions had the full complement on board—people would drift in and out depending on the task at hand and their personal circumstances. A great deal of flux, rather than stability, describes thecomings and goings of RCOLers. Of the commissioners, only Glaze is originally based near Toronto, and she also attends to nearly-full duties as a superintendent in one of Canada's largest school systems. Begin is renting an apartment just down the street from 101, for RCOL's duration. The other commissioners commute from North Bay (Murphy), Cornwall (Bharti), and Ottawa (Caplan). For the commissioners, with the exception of the hearings phase, RCOL was not a nine-to-five, five-days-a-week, office job. Rather, certain days were scheduled to accommodate discussion and debate throughout the process. When away, some commissioners maintained regular contact with staffers by means of E-mail and telephone. During the summers of 1993 and 1994, they also took holidays.

Of the researchers, not all started at the beginning of the process in May 1993 and most did not stay till January 1995. McGowan, Caron-Réaume and Burnett started in September, 1993. Ziegler was holidaying in southeast Asia from December 1993 to March 1994 and left RCOL in the fall of 1994; McGowan, who initially came on a half-time basis until this proved unworkable, took five weeks off during the summer of 1994 and returned to OECTA that September. Burnett travelled to West Africa for five weeks during the fall of 1994 and returned to RCOL for the few remaining weeks. Summers was on sick leave for much of the spring of 1994 and he and Caron-Réaume left RCOL that fall. In the fall of 1994, with still much of the Report in draft stage, only Watson, Lindhout, and I remained as researchers. The youth outreach strategy had by that time been concluded and Hicks had left. Tansey had by that time also moved on to a job in the private sector. In the place of those who departed the organization came a small contingent of production people, editors, and translators, who worked at a feverish pitch until the end of December 1994.

At this juncture, we take leave of those RCOLers who performed various support functions, and
concentrate on the individual and collective endeavours of co-chairs, commissioners, the executive director, and researchers. They are the core of this dissertation, both as subjects engaged in a number of major tasks and as voices whose views about their experiences within RCOL contribute to understandings offered in this chapter.

Composition of the Commission: The Players' Views

According to Cooke (Interview, 1996), the composition of the Commission reflected a number of considerations, several of which are "political" in the sense of securing representation of regional, educator, visible minority, Catholic, and student interests, as well as political party representation. In addition, the preference was given to individuals deemed progressive. The five names settled upon were culled from a list of 30 or so individuals.

The numbers were almost dictated by some of the names. I don't mean they told us how many people to be on, but when you start coming up with some names like Monique and Gerry and when you want to try to fill it out in terms of regional representation it then begins to get a little bit complicated. Five [commissioners] were quite frankly more than we originally wanted to have but I was insistent that we have a student on and then we had to have somebody from Northern Ontario. We obviously wanted to have a teacher, and when you add that all together, that sort of dictated the numbers. Everything from visible minority representation and those kind of things [meant] we wanted to have a group of commissioners that we felt would have some credibility within the province and that was why we ultimately brought it together. We chose Msgr. Murphy because we had to have somebody with credibility in the Catholic system.

We brainstormed within my office and with the deputy minister [Charles Pascal] we put together names. I asked the Ministry initially to give me some names; give me 30 names of people that would be qualified to be on the commission and I asked my political staff as well. Then we started narrowing down those names looking at where the holes were. For the student we went out to the regional offices and into either the teacher organizations or supervisors' offices and we asked for an outstanding student...We started checking with principals and others; that was how we got Manisha...We also went to the black community and checked and I checked with some of my cabinet caucus colleagues. There's very little in terms of these five people of being preoccupied in any way with their politics, the only two quite frankly that are known for their politics are Monique and Gerry, and one of those is not a New Democrat. We were not hung up on politics: we wanted progressive people. Ken Dryden came very close to being on the commission and then I got feedback that his kids were attending private schools which I have no problem with; that's what he wants to decide for his family: it's not my
business...[but] I felt that would be a bad signal to a lot of people in the province to have somebody's kids going to a private school system. [Dryden was the former star goal tender of the Montreal Canadiens in the early 1970s, who later trained as lawyer, and during RCOL's deliberations was writing a book about how students experience public schools. In 1997, he was appointed President of the Toronto Maple Leafs hockey organization. For the record, I saw him assiduously writing notes at the RCOL public hearings in Mississauga.]

Cooke (Interview, 1996) maintained that the choice of progressive, non-teacher-bashing, "outsiders" as the majority on the commission was necessary to ensure the external credibility of the Commission, that reform was indeed on the agenda, that what was to be expected was not more of the same from "insiders" wedded to the status quo.

I was trying to look at progressive people who didn't have any totally fixed views, so that we would be able to get a report that would not have two or three strikes against it from the day that it was tabled...People like Gerry and Monique are pretty open-minded people. I think most people I talked to had confidence [Caplan and Bégin] weren't out to bash teachers or to bash the system but they believed as we did there needed to be some change for the future...I was concerned that if we had administrators or trustees or teachers dominating it people would say the book had already been written.

Caplan (Interview, 1995) says new voices were heard, loudly and clearly, within the Commission, albeit with some misgivings on his part, as he describes the "political baggage" the commissioners carried with them to RCOL:

Manisha Bharti never let us forget about kids, Dennis Murphy never let us forget about Roman Catholics, and about stuff outside Toronto... Without the work of Manisha, and Selwyn Hicks, in the youth outreach strategy, we would have never met so many kids from so many different backgrounds. Avis Glaze was an advocate of black interests and not an advocate of black interests. Monique Bégin began insisting she represented nobody but ended up being the representative of francophones...We had a part-time Roman Catholic researcher and a full-time francophone researcher, this was a political decision [bringing in these two researchers] that I did not think appropriate...and I resisted it...maybe I wasn't sensitive enough on the issue...We spent enormous amounts of time on francophone issues but the issues were clear from the start and we didn't go beyond the Cousineau report. The Roman Catholics were given everything they wanted...

Murphy (Interview, 1995) contended that the composition of the commissioners left out a significant voice:

It would seem to me the purpose of the government constituted the Commission as it did,
was to present the face of the Commission to the general public which reflected the new makeup of the province of Ontario and this Commission did. But I think the white Protestant community had a legitimate question as to how they were represented...They represent a significant percentage of the population. The government must have struggled with that as an obvious question, as whether the makeup of the Commission was represented by the broad community.

Other voices may have been lacking within RCOL: several researchers (A,C,F, Interviews, 1995) maintained that the Commission lacked the voices of parents who had been active in the Ontario educational community, and the voices of teachers who were not spokespeople of the federations.

Researcher C (Interview, 1995) said the composition of the research team and their preferences was also a critical issue in determining what got heard and what did not, and how the issues got presented: one researcher's main interest was dropout and minority issues, and who steered the pro black-focus schools work of O.I.S.E. sociology professor George Dei within the Commission; another researcher was blocked by commissioners and the executive director from "selling" his concept of accountability; one was an enthusiastic supporter of early childhood education and of the work of Allan King, the Queen's University professor of education whose views on secondary education had a large impact on that section in the Report; one had strong views on teacher education but "didn't want to break up the monopoly of the faculties of education", and who put the views of Michael Fullan [the Dean of Education at FEUT and authority on implementation of change in public education] on the front burner; and one came with an "open mind" about the role of teacher federations and was instrumental in developing the argumentation for the college of teachers. Researcher C thought that the researchers' purview was unnecessarily narrow, and would have been enriched by contracting out sections of the mandate to at least two different outside sources, for each aspect, and letting the commissioners choose among the options.

Analyzing Member Composition

This section begins with an analysis of the composition of the Commission, both commissioners and researchers, what interests they represented, and what general values they espoused. An integral part of this discussion is an examination of the role of two types of bias that were at play within RCOL.

At this point, though, my task is to outline some aspects of political ideology and philosophy that
emerged from the data as critical elements in the ways that RCOLers explained and justified their positions on issues. That is, I look at the role of political ideology in general and educational ideologies in particular.

Doem and Phidd (1983), Pal (1992), and others describe Canada's political culture as defined by three broad ideologies: liberalism, conservatism, and socialism. Ideologies are more or less explicit political beliefs, values, and attitudes held by those whose political involvement is high. Ideologies are more cohesive than political beliefs usually held by ordinary citizenry (Bell, 1984). Broadly-speaking within the Canadian tradition, liberalism encompasses a belief in defending private property and the market economy with some moderation of the effects of capitalism through government intervention. Conservatism includes a belief in the need to preserve values and proven traditions, together with a contemporary support for minimum government intervention. Socialism adopts a collective view of society, a de-emphasis on individualism, and a concern for the have-nots taking control of their own lives. A policy actor may support a political ideology as a form of political culture that defines zones of politically acceptable behaviour, in both affirmative and constraining senses (Bell, 1984).

In the context of public education, di Norica (1980) also saw liberalism, conservatism, and socialism as forming a broad ideological basis, with the primary tension defined by contrasting liberal and conservative images of education. Manzer's work (1994) on the political philosophy of public education is the most comprehensive of its type. Manzer (1994) posits much of the debate within educational discourse in contending liberal and communitarian traditions, but with various branches of liberalism emerging as virtually hegemonic in their impact on public education:

Canadian concepts of educational purpose, models of educational governance, principles of educational policy design, and criteria of political evaluation are drawn from opposing ideological traditions of liberalism and communitarianism. Liberalism has been the hegemonic ideology in Canadian educational politics and policy, but liberalism historically has been divided among distinctive "political," "economic," and "ethical" branches. Communitarianism is divided between opposing versions. Because of the central issues of religion and language, educational politics, and policies in Canada have been deeply and continuously influenced by doctrines of conservative communitarianism. The historical importance of social democratic and democratic social ideology in Canadian political development means that the ideas of radical communitarianism also merit consideration, even though in educational politics and policy-making they usually have been indistinguishable in practice from those advocated by ethical liberals. (pp. 12-13)
In short, the political philosophy of Canadian education is an evolving set of conflicting and complementary ideas about the needs and rights of individuals, groups, communities, with roots in accommodations based on language and religion that predate Confederation. Paquette (1995) and Allison and Paquette (1991) come to a similar conclusion as that reached by Manzer, that the thrust of recent educational reform is away from an emphasis on equalitarian goals to an emphasis on efficiency, accountability, and equity goals, or what Manzer described as an orientation to technological liberalism.

A Progressive Bias

Minister Cooke (Interview, 1996), directly involved in the issue of RCOL's commissioner composition, noted that the criteria used in his government's choice were of the matrix variety, i.e., each commissioner should meet several criteria. Some of these criteria were of the "political" variety, in the sense of securing representation of regional, educator, visible minority, Catholic, and student interests, as well as political party representation (the political party affiliations of Caplan, New Democratic Party, and Bégin, Liberal). Thus, the backgrounds of commissioners were deliberately diverse: Bégin, a white female francophone; Caplan, a white male and secularist Jew; Glaze, a female black originally from Jamaica; Murphy, a white male of Irish origin and a Catholic priest; and Bharti, a female student of East Indian origin. In addition, Cooke's preference was for individuals deemed progressive, reform-minded, but non-teacher-bashing. The five names settled upon were culled from a list of 30 or so individuals. Cooke maintained that the choice of progressive "outsiders" as the majority on the Commission was to ensure its external credibility. This credibility was necessary to send the signal that reform was indeed on the agenda and that what was to be expected was not more of the same from "insiders" wedded to the status quo and to stalemate. This political calculus involved a trade-off of insider expertise for outsider reform sentiments, and a partial trade-off of interests as defined by organized, inside stakeholders for those defined by individuals chosen to represent both the "old voices" and the "newer voices" from a wider interest-base.

At a general ideological level, commissioner orientation was progressive, left-of-centre, and reform-minded. All the commissioners described themselves as left of centre, from left liberal to socialist, with a strong commitment to equity and social justice issues. Murphy (Interview, 1995) contended that what the five commissioners shared was a commitment to equity:
In social orientation, I have no hesitation in saying that the commissioners were equity-driven, profoundly committed to social justice. We were convinced from the beginning that there shouldn't be any kid in the province that does not receive equitable human or economic resources to assist in his or her education.

Murphy also noted that both co-chairs came from political party backgrounds but that the other commissioners were "apolitical" in the political party sense.

The inclusion of Murphy as the Roman Catholic representative, and Bégin as the francophone representative, also meant that the composition of the Commission attended to communitarian concerns based on religion and language, a leitmotif of Canadian educational politics. In Manzer's terms (1994, p. 15), Murphy (wearing the Roman Catholic hat) and Bégin (wearing the francophone hat) would probably be described as radical communitarians, who support the notion of a political community as "an egalitarian order in which individuals are equal, governed by cooperation and consensus based on relationships of democratic participation", as distinguished from "conservative" communitarians for whom "hierarchy, order, and obedience" are central concerns. What conservative and radical communitarians share is a belief that "because linguistic and cultural communities are prior to individuals, their protection and development is the condition for the survival, belonging, esteem, and creativity of all living and future members of the community" (Manzer, 1994, p.15). Thus communitarians share a general preoccupation of conservative political ideology, the need to preserve traditional values and proven traditions of particular communities. For explicit supporters of multiculturalism, the sensitivities of communitarianism also have a strong resonance, but this depends heavily on which community is at issue; in this respect, both Glaze and Caplan had strong radical communitarian streaks.

In terms of composition, then, the commissioners encompassed the basic duality of liberalism and communitarism that Manzer defines as quintessentially Canadian. Noticeably absent, however, is any member who explicitly defined herself or himself as conservative. As Researcher B noted (Interview, 1995), some researchers considered themselves more conservative politically than the commissioners, and the former were not without some means of making their thoughts and opinions known to the latter, with varying degrees of success. The public hearings were the main source of a conservative position that stressed the role of schools as transmitters of traditional values, a position shared by Murphy, and in the voices of parents unhappy with the secularization of the public school system, and in the voices of educational reform groups that sought a return to traditional standards of teaching and learning.
I would classify myself as one of the more conservative researchers. In comparison with most commissioners, politically I would be less progressive oriented and more to the right. From an educational perspective, I would be more inclined than commissioners (except for Murphy) and most researchers to stress a purpose of schooling that is consistent with traditional values, norms, and standards. On occasion I would give voice to these beliefs.

In Chapter 2, I noted the observations of Aucoin (1971) and Simpson (1997) that the executive appointment of commissioners is a critical issue: through a gatekeeper function, who is appointed to lead a commission may define what issues get debated or excluded and how issues are treated. Commissioners' backgrounds may skew how the issues are perceived, with the professional backgrounds and work experiences of commissioners acting as a lens to pattern perceptions. In the case of RCOL, the appointment of "progressive" people to the Commission adds another dimension to this understanding, that is that use of a general ideological orientation to connect together the policy intentions of the government and the policy advice it will receive from a commission.

A progressive bias would to some extent prove to unify the ranks of RCOL commissioners, predisposing them to act and think in concert on certain issues. I use the notion of "bias" as defined by The Cassell Dictionary (1990): [as a noun]...a leaning of the mind; inclination, prejudice, prepossession; [as a verb]...to cause to incline to one side; to prejudice, to prepossess" (p. 126). Bias in this sense is related to the notion of the various faces of power (Mawhinney, 1993): the mobilization of bias or organizing out of some issues through non-decisions (Bacharach and Baratz, 1962); and the relational view, preferred by interpretive analysts, that biases are socially and culturally determined patterns of group and institutional behaviour (Lukes, 1974). While the sharing of a progressive bias with Minister Cooke may have provided for some cohesion of thinking and value orientation between RCOL and the Ministry, such a commonality would also represent a face of the exercise of governmental power over a commission. Power, observed Stone (1989, p. 25), operates through "influence, cooperation, and loyalty" in a policy community; a shared ideology is a potent glue that can draw upon all three of these elements. This commonality of ideology would ensure that RCOL commissioners would be generally sympathetic to the Ministry's recent anti-racism and ethno-cultural equity initiatives and would use them as a foundation. The progressive tilt also meant that the views of Quality Education groups that were ubiquitous in the hearings would be screened out, a priori, from serious consideration. Both Cooke and
Caplan had identified these groups in interviews as being destructive, right-wing, with ties to Dianne Cunningham of the provincial Progressive Conservative Party and PC education critic in the Legislature, with a pipe-line to the Toronto Sun, a popular but stridently right-wing daily tabloid.

Beyond this commonality, however, the arm's-length relationship and the strong individualistic disposition of the co-chairs would offset the relationship of RCOL to the Minister. Co-chair rejection of some of Cooke's agenda such as school-board amalgamation is sufficient proof that there were limits to governmental influence through ideology. Stone, after all, reminds us that power is driven by "the laws of passion rather than the laws of matter" (p.25), and according to Cooke, the co-chairs "ferociously" defended their independence.

From an analytical perspective, this relationship would tend to support a key tenet of neo-institutionalism, that political institutions of the state are not neutral "black boxes" that subordinate the policy process to a function of various contexts (March & Olsen, 1989). Rather, this position emphasizes "the way that the state in any given society patterns individual behaviour" (Pal, 1992, p. 98). Here the macro-level of the state (the Minister/Ministry of Education and Training) exerted influence over a quasi-independent public instrument (RCOL) through the lever of ideology. But it must be noted this influence was limited, and while the shared progressive orientation to some extent shaped the policy process within RCOL, providing some strategic direction and undercutting some choices, that orientation did not preclude the determination of commissioners to produce a Report according to their own, sometimes divergent, preferences.

The Commission member question also involves the discussion of interests and voices and how they were or were not represented within the Commission. Stone (1989, p.7) observed that "the truly significant policy questions" involve "how people fight over visions of the public interest or the nature of the community." Within RCOL, commissioners fought not only over a generalized notion of community and education as a public good, but also over the particular interests of various communities that they explicitly or implicitly represented. This is a complicated, paradoxical issue: while the general orientation of the Commission was tilted towards outside stakeholders, its makeup was at the same time structured on an acknowledgment of the rights of certain inside stakeholders to be at the commissioners' table. At one level, the appointment of "outsiders" as co-chairs was a strong signal from Cooke that the direction of the Commission would not be in the hands of established insiders; his expectation was that
RCOL not be a stylized dance, to use Peterson's term (1983), of entrenched stakeholders that would ensure the continuance of a mutually-protective stalemate. This message was interpreted sympathetically by the co-chairs who, as discussed below, conceived of themselves as the standard-bearers of outside stakeholders. This orientation may also be construed as an ideological manifestation of governmental influence on RCOL through the exercise of a shared bias. At another level, the appointment of the commissioners to reflect "the new make up of Ontario" (Murphy's words) was nevertheless based on the principle that various interests were at risk and that some inside stakeholders should be granted a direct say in the process and outcomes of the Commission, while others should not be.

This ambiguity of identities and allegiances among commissioners was a product of the "matrix" selection process. The political reality within RCOL was that commissioners were either advocates for specific interests and/or symbols that the "new makeup" of Ontario mattered in the composition of the Commission. As it worked out in practice, the representation of interests within RCOL amounted to an uneasy meld of new and old voices, a juxtaposition that aroused continued conflict. That the commissioners perceived themselves as representatives of both insider and outsider interests and multiple interests, and were not beholden to any notions of transcendent objectivity, was freely acknowledged by them, as the earlier quotes testify.

The concept of "deep core beliefs" also had some impact on the role of ideas within RCOL, according to several RCOLers. Bégin (Interview, 1995) differentiated between the shared progressive value orientation of the commissioners and a deeper set of beliefs that prompted some conflict. This conflict she attributed to her co-chair, Caplan:

Despite that [commonality of progressive values] we had a few major clashes which were about values, on very fundamental views of society, social change, progress. The conflict was along the axis of cynicism and despair versus hope and trying to do something. We could never come up with something strong in Chapter 4 on values in education...My co-chair [Caplan] is a born pessimist and cynic.

What Bégin is pointing to is that, in the structure of the belief systems of commissioners, a fundamental rift was evident in "deep (normative) core" that describes the "fundamental normative and ontological axioms" held by policy actors (Sabatier, 1988, p. 143). Both Murphy and Researcher F agreed with this assessment: the commonality of progressive values of the commissioners did not preclude their inability to find fundamental agreement on what values should inform the school system, leading to a diluted
discussion of values in the Purposes section of the Report. Nor did the commonality of progressive values prevent value-based conflict within RCOL, particularly in regard to various internal debates in which excellence/quality and equity were featured, debates that Researcher F described as "never really resolved," particularly regarding conflicting images of the school as social lever or as a centre for intellectual development. In other words, while shared progressive ideology did provide some unified thinking within commissioner ranks, their "deep core" beliefs simultaneously provided for a measure of divergence.

If the composition of the Commission was important to which interests had voices and which did not, the choice of a small research team was equally significant in understanding whose ideas and preferences got front-burner status and those that did not.

Outsider and Insider Bias

If a progressive bias served to some extent to unify the ranks of the commissioners and build a rickety bridge in the direction of MET, the insider/outside bias within RCOL divided the ranks of both commissioners and researchers. Bias may be related to the exercise of power but is more subtle than another power-related idea, coercion. In the case of bias, one is not forced to do anything; rather one's ideas are, in the phraseology of several researchers, "off the screen" or "screened out" because of some preordained attribute or association. Bias (for reform) within RCOL was built into the process from the commissioning and orientation stages, and was a construct created to counter a perceived bias of another type (for the status quo). The unstated at-the-time but nevertheless taken-for-granted rules of the game, defined in large measure by the co-chairs and enforced by the second executive director, were largely association-based, and consist of three interconnected parts: a) the views and interests of "outside" stakeholders were to be preferred over those of "inside" stakeholders; b) that Glaze was an insider in the educational system, a representative of the status quo, whose ideas were tainted as being anti-reform; and c) the researchers seconded by MET, against the wishes of the co-chairs, were an infringement of the arm's-length relationship and agents of the status quo.

The bias of the co-chairs, on the record as pro-reform and anti-status quo, created a dual hierarchy of influence within the ranks of commissioners and researchers. In this regard, educational policy communities have been disaggregated into circles of players with varying degrees of influence
(Marshall, Mitchell, & Wirt, 1986); in a similar vein, Peters (1977) explicitly analyzed the relationship of "insiders and outsiders" and the politics of pressure group influence. Within RCOL, the assumptions of both sets of these scholars were turned upside down: outsiders were "in" and insiders were "out."

Bégéin (Interview, 1995) was forthright in explaining the existence, and nature of the bias that was built into the Commission by the government and operationalized by co-chair stances over the duration of the Commission:

We had a Commission composed of outsiders, with the exception of one commissioner: this was a deliberate decision on the part of the government. It's also reflected in terms of your bias, orientation, that to a certain extent you are outsiders who listen and understand outsiders, and who are sceptical about insiders. One would assume, if it were the other way around, that if you were all from the inside, so-called experts from the inside, you would be in danger of possibly repeating all the common sins...

Within commissioner ranks, Glaze was openly scorned in internal deliberations by the co-chairs, their charge being that Glaze, as a working superintendent, was a spokesperson/defender of the "status quo," "vested interests," and "edocrats"; Glaze was said to be only interested in "incremental change" (Observation notes, June 15, 1994). The co-chairs declared on more than one occasion that their "radical" outsider bias was to "shake the system up". For her part, Glaze (Interview, 1995) found herself at an early stage isolated within the Commission and fighting an uphill battle: "At times I felt totally demoralized. My contribution [to RCOL] could have been a lot more, but I was not permitted. There was this deep suspicion about educators."

Murphy could have been subjected to the same treatment as Glaze for the same sorts of reasons. He had been a major player in Roman Catholic education in Ontario; among other issues he had been involved in the high-stakes politics surrounding the extended-funding issue (Bill 30) that had consumed much of the latter half of the 1980s (Mawhinney, 1993). His insider status was not perhaps as clear because of his recent retirement as director of the Toronto-based Institute for Catholic Education. Within RCOL Murphy's primary task came to be defending the autonomy of the Roman Catholic component of the education system, an effort that was, by definition, status-quo oriented. He was subjected to some hostility and ridicule from Caplan's corner on Roman Catholic and religious choice issues, but Bégéin generally treated Murphy with respect and he did not suffer the open humiliation that was heaped upon Glaze. This was because he was perceived by Bégéin (Interview, 1995) as anti-establishment despite his
Catholic connections:

I had the impression that my co-chair [Caplan], with his hangup against all religions, especially Catholic in this case, had a side of him watching that he wouldn’t be sold a bill of goods on something Catholic... I also observed that [Murphy] was not mixing up the spirituality of Catholicism with the Church hierarchy. He, too, was anti-establishment, like the other commissioners except for [Glaze], and was not trying to sell us all kinds of baloney.

Upon the completion of RCOL’s mandate, Murphy would once again join the ranks of insiders, taking on a responsible position with the Ontario Roman Catholic Separate School Boards Association based in Toronto. For her part, Bharti was treated by other commissioners as a junior member of the enterprise and accorded a friendly respect that the adults found hard to confer upon one another.

Insider/outsider identity is further complicated when one probes the life history of Caplan. Caplan (Interview, 1995) identified with the outsider camp and claimed in terms of his own educational knowledge base to have started at RCOL with a “tabula rasa within the limits of my ideology.” But his slate was not nearly so clean on either claim. While not an educational practitioner at the kindergarten to OAC level, Caplan was hardly a novice on matters educational, having taught the history of education at OISE before moving to other endeavours. Although he was not formally affiliated at the commissioning in May 1993 with any insider stakeholder groups, in the 1960s and 1970s as a NDP activist he was heavily involved in downtown Toronto school-board politics. Moreover, Caplan’s commitment to the NDP from the 1960s to the present can only be described in terms of a consumate insidership in the political party that formed the government during RCOL’s mandate. This political connection was not lost on those critics who tried to portray RCOL as a politically-inspired instrument to lessen the heat on the NDP Minister of Education and Training and/or to legitimate policy decisions already agreed upon in government circles. In fact, Caplan’s role as a party insider was more complex than these critics alleged. For example, I describe, in the following section on context, and in Chapter 7, Caplan’s dismissive views about Minister Cooke’s “agenda” and Cooke’s subsequent treatment of RCOL recommendations. One inference that could be made from Caplan’s views is that as an old-guard socialist and éminence grise of the NDP, he thought that Cooke’s agenda was politically opportunistic and that Cooke’s credentials as a social democrat were highly suspect. Evidence to support this inference is telling. From the advent of the social contract in 1993 to the fall of the NDP government in 1995, a rift was apparent within NDP ranks on a host of issues related to adherence to political principles (Martell, 1996).
From this perspective, one may reflect, Cooke’s later decision in 1996 to resign his NDP seat in the legislature as a member of the third party, and to accept an appointment by a Progressive Conservative Minister (Snobelen) as co-chair of the Educational Improvement Commission, could be interpreted as indicating that Cooke’s commitment to partisan NDP politics and cherished principles was indeed questionable. In any case, Caplan’s own identity as an “outsider” should not be accepted at face value. Like Murphy’s situation, the reality of identities, and allegiances, was more complex and compromised than a straight-forward reading of the outsider/insider dichotomy might at first blush suggest.

Among the researchers, MET-seconded personnel were relegated to a second-class status by the co-chairs. One reason for this treatment was the co-chairs’ resentment of the imposition of seconded staff that they saw as an infringement of the arm’s-length relationship. Co-chairs had wanted to make their choices over staffing as they had on previous commissions, but Cooke wanted to keep costs in check and decided to second MET staff to RCOL, and RCOL’s budget did not allow for additional outside staff. "Imposed" MET researchers were viewed by the co-chairs as organizational constraints, not knowledgeable resources: "We found ourselves with staff we wouldn’t have hired under different circumstances" (Caplan, Interview, 1995). The other reason for this treatment was that MET secondments were stigmatized as being part of the "establishment," that staffers from MET were inextricably wedded to the status quo. This co-chair bias against MET-seconded researchers created an informal, two-tier hierarchy among researchers within RCOL: non-MET researchers, especially the two chosen directly by the two co-chairs, had more frequent and direct access to the commissioners, especially co-chairs, and were seen by their colleagues as being given a much more sympathetic reception.

Researcher B (Interview, 1995) saw an ironic note in the perception of the co-chairs that MET staffers were by association defined as "status quo supporters," as the current MET was "volatile and changing," with little stability of its own, devoid of "groupthink," and bereft of a large chunk of its once vaunted "professional expertise." The "closed shop" of yore had been displaced by successive reorganizations, beginning with the Liberal Peterson government of the mid-1980s and continuing with the Rae NDP government of the early 1990s. The "old boys' network" that had presided confidently over Ontario education in the 1950s and 1960s had largely been dismantled, and decentralization to the school board level had over a generation somewhat stripped the Ministry of several levers to influence public education in any coherent fashion (Townsend, 1995).
Few educators now occupied major roles at the upper levels of the Ministry (assistant deputy ministers and others positions of responsibility), as a result of the "decredentializing" initiatives changes engineered by Charles Pascal, Cooke's Deputy Minister. This architect of the Ministry reorganization efforts during RCOL's life-span told MET staffers that these changes had successfully "eliminated the collective memory" of the Ministry, according to MET-seconded researchers. Observations about MET's decline in educational leadership was also a constant refrain of the public hearings. More than a decade of Ministry internal reorganization, start-stop policies, and recurring problems in curriculum, assessment, and funding had convinced major stakeholders that MET was now part of the problem, and that the status-quo oriented old-boys' network was more myth than reality. Within RCOL, however, the myth was alive, as MET-seconded researchers found to their dismay.

Referring mainly to the then-Ministry of Education but also commenting on the nature of the Ontario educational community in general in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Mawhinney (1993, p. 398) wrote:

This policy community is unique in the degree of integration of its members. The accounts in this study confirm the view that this community is "in-bred, with an iron-fisted certification policy and an informal set of career pattern norms which prevent anyone outside of Ontario, or anyone who has not served a socializing apprenticeship, from gaining a position of responsibility" (Hickcox & Li, 1992, p. 18). As a dimension of institutional behaviour, this integration enhances the capacity of the state to act autonomously [consistent with the neo-institutional perspective].

This, then, was the image of MET embedded in the co-chairs' minds, a reflection of a common understanding of MET and the Ontario educational policy community in general. Yet by 1993 serious cracks in the image had already appeared. For example, the "iron-fisted" certification policy only applied to some positions in MET; in 1993 senior positions such as assistant deputy ministers were filled, with one exception, by individuals who not only were not certificated, but who had non-educator backgrounds. Jill Hutcheon, RCOL's first executive director, was seconded to RCOL from MET and came from a non-educator background. She returned to MET in August 1993 in her new role as an assistant deputy minister. Raf Di Cecco, RCOL's second executive director, came to MET from the Ministry of Labour, and was also a non-educator; she returned to MET upon the rolling up of RCOL in the new position of acting assistant deputy minister. The "decredentializing" efforts of Pascal had as their aim precisely the break-up of this "highly-integrated" community within MET. Anecdotal evidence from many sources
suggests that during this same time period many of the MET "old hands" were "encouraged" to take early retirement, and were either not replaced (because of downsizing) or replaced often with non-educators.

These findings call into question the continued validity of the description of MET as a highly-integrated community driven by collective norms and routines. As of this writing, after a decade of restructuring and large-scale staffing changes, MET as presently construed may be more appropriately described as fragmented, disorganized, and lacking a collective sense of purpose and direction. A "collective memory" of one type may be erased through administrative fiat and organizational change, but it cannot easily be reconstructed. A corollary of this finding is that the notion of MET's capacity as an autonomous state entity can no longer be accepted at face value, and that MET's ability to shape policy within the larger policy community, through the inventory ascribed to the neo-institutional repertoire, should henceforth be demonstrated on a case-by-case basis, or an initiative-by-initiative basis. On the theme of taking a more initiative-by-initiative approach, Townsend (1995) noted that the role of the Ministry in policy implementation is anything but monolithic, and that the evolution of scores of policies over the past two decades suggests a number of modes were at work.

The demise of the MET old boys' network and its influence in the policy community can be further illustrated by the contrast of the RCOL process with that of the Hall-Dennis Committee. In the case of RCOL, MET's direct involvement in the process was in the choice of commissioners, their progressive tilt, the control of the budget, a few meetings with Minister Cooke and RCOL commissioners, and the secondment of research and support staff. The substantive impact of MET's inputs on the content of RCOL's Report were limited for a number of reasons and the contrast with the Ministry's input into the Hall-Dennis Report is startling: "For the [Hall-Dennis] Report was, first and foremost, the product of Ontario's Department of Education itself" (Gidney, 1996, p. 36). To be more precise, the Committee was particularly influenced by the Department's curriculum branch that had a distinct "progressive" educational bias and an understanding of the educational process that was pegged towards the elementary panel. Ricker's analysis (1981) showed that every major phase of the Committee's existence, and ultimately the Hall-Dennis Report's content, was controlled by the Department of Education in general and the curriculum branch in particular:

[The Hall-Dennis Committee] was initially structured in a way that was wanted by the Department; its agendas and working papers were prepared by the Department's staff; almost all of the expert testimony during the early stages of its work was provided by the
Department; and finally, a number of its members were close associates, or former teachers and professors, of members of the Department's curriculum branch...[The Committee] was clearly biased before its work even commenced [and] the consensus that emerged in fact reflected a basic view that was wanted.(pp. 612-613)

Stapleton's analysis (1975) of the policy-making process surrounding secondary school curriculum and organization, HS1 1969-70, demonstrated that the curriculum branch's bias was still intact and its influence undiminished as shown by its members' ability to influence the outcomes of this process, despite the protestations of the more conservative supervisory branch.

In RCOL's case, using Ricker's analysis as a guideline, aside from the composition and secondment issues, the structuring of the process was largely an in-house construction, i.e., not driven by some cabal-like grouping based in the Ministry. Agendas, once freed from the public hearings process, were at the discretion of the commissioners. Working papers were written by various researchers but none of these had substantial impact; the draft chapters of the Report were the main focussing documents, and two non-MET seconded researchers had the greatest influence in the content of many of these; MET secondments had generally much less influence. The expert testimony was largely non-MET based and the presenters in the hearings, numbering in the thousands, were assigned on a first-come, first-serve basis. The backgrounds of RCOL commissioners and researchers were diverse and group-think was noticeable by its absence. RCOL was also defined by bias, but its particular manifestations were largely co-chair driven, and were partially mobilized to curtail the influence of Minister Cooke's agenda and of the efforts of MET-seconded researchers. Finally, RCOL's Report is not a reflection of "a basic view that was wanted" by any institutional sponsor or by any one individual; rather it is the mesh of a number of views that reflect preferences of commissioners, researchers, and of inside and outside stakeholders.

THE CONTEXTS

Mandate

On May 4, 1993, MET Minister Dave Cooke announced the establishment of the Royal Commission on Learning, by Order In Council of the Lieutenant Governor, pursuant to section 2 of the Public Inquiries Act, R.S.O. 1990. In the Order In Council (Government of Ontario, 1993, p.1), the Government identified the need "to set new directions in education to ensure that Ontario youth are well
prepared for the challenges of the 21st century." The Commission's broadly-defined mandate (Order in Council, p.1-4) was to provide a "vision and action plan to guide Ontario's reform of elementary and secondary education", with four domains to be considered in depth: a coherent vision of the school system, including the values and principles that should guide Ontario education and the key goals of the system; the educational programs of Ontario schools, including defining the knowledge, skills, and values that students would require for the future, the organization and delivery of the curriculum, the transition of students from school to work, continuous quality improvement, the education of teachers, and learning standards for the system; and accountability for results and the governance of the system, including the responsibilities of the partners in education (students, parents, school boards, the community, and the Ministry), and the organizational structure for elementary and secondary education, including models for French-language governance. The Commission was requested to deliver a report to the government on these matters by no later than December 31, 1994. The government also placed a number of constraints upon RCOL's purview: any recommendations the Commission might make to modify governance structures would have to respect the Constitutional and Charter rights for Roman Catholics and Francophones. The Commission was also asked not to address educational claims of religious groups that were before the courts. Education finance was also beyond its scope, as the matter was "being dealt with by the Education Finance Reform Project" (MET, 1993a, p.3).

Genesis

The genesis of RCOL had actually preceded Cooke's Ministry. Caplan (Interview, 1995) says the New Democratic Party, while in opposition, "had failed to take policy seriously, and [former education minister Tony] Solipo needed help." Solipo held the portfolio for about two years, until February 2, 1993, one month before RCOL's establishment. Caplan added that the momentum for some drastic action in policy development had spilled over to Solipo's successor, Dave Cooke. The decision to create some special body, a committee, a task force, or a commission, to tie together a number of largely non-implemented policy pieces, was bantered about within the Ministry and Cabinet for about a year prior to the formation of RCOL (Researcher B, Interview, 1995).

Bégún (Orbit, 1995, p.57) had a similar understanding of RCOL's genesis. Pondering retrospectively several months after the release of the Report, she observed:
Historians may elect, in future years, to study the origins of the Royal Commission on Learning, but I will undertake the risk now to suggest a few research hypotheses...I believe that the need for in-depth educational reforms had been identified by the then-Minister and his Ministry in the years 1991/1992. Actions were attempted, and at least one memorandum went to Cabinet, to no avail. Either education was simply not on the political agenda or the debate had become very heated and Cabinet was divided about the course of action suggested, or both...

Former Minister Dave Cooke (Interview, 1996) acknowledged that the idea for the Commission had preceded his Ministry (which commenced in February 1993), but claimed that he had welcomed the Commission's use as a high profile vehicle for public consultation in the development of a provincial education strategy. Public consultation about the terms of reference for the Commission was part of laying the ground work for the Commission, a process in which Cooke took an active role. Cooke (Interview, 1996) noted:

We actually had talked about [establishing the Commission] in the policy and priorities board before I was Minister of Education. Things weren't moving that quickly, and when I got over to the Ministry, I guess we came to the conclusion that we should proceed [with the idea] because if there was going to be more systematic change, or overall change, we needed to have a consultation process. What better consultation process, that gave the kind of status that it required, than a royal commission, so that's why we made the decision to proceed.

I would say that the development of the terms of reference themselves were pretty unique in that we had a series of six public forums across the province where the specific question for people in attendance was: we are going to have a royal commission, we need some input on the terms of reference. We started off in Ottawa and included another 5 communities and had literally thousands of people attending these public forums and these phone-in shows and all the rest of it. It was a pretty substantial process; we had to pull together the terms of reference, we got that done and then we had to work on the names of people to be on the commission.

These meetings shaped the terms of reference and the substance of much of the Order-in-Council, massaged by the direct intervention of Cooke and his Deputy Minister, Charles Pascal. Despite all the work and detail that went into them, these written directions were rarely discussed within RCOL, and they subsequently provided little direction in internal deliberations. The reason for this discrepancy is explained below in terms of how the co-chairs perceived their mandate and in their determination to define and maintain the arm's-length relationship that observers normally associate with governments and
the ad hoc policy advice instruments they create from time to time.

Co-chair Perceptions of the Mandate

The governmental mandate, as defined in the Order-in-Council and terms of reference, was considered only a stepping stone by the co-chairs. Caplan (Interview, 1995) thought that the mandate statement, prepared by the Ministry with the assistance of a specially-formed stakeholders group, was "sexy, political, opportunistic, and accidental", and that like many documents of this type was reflective of the concerns of the moment, more accurate as a polling device for stakeholder opinions than a thoughtful blueprint for the future. "Phony" was the word that Bégin used to describe the mandate (Observation notes, July 13, 1994). Cooke (Interview, 1996) envisaged RCOL as synthesizer of MET policies and as a platform for promoting educational reform but neither co-chair wanted to be hemmed in by present government policy, consigned to repackaging stalled policies or promoting new ones that Cooke publicly favoured. Instead, Caplan (Interview, 1995) saw RCOL as an advocacy vehicle, "to lead the debate about education in the right direction...In the end we did exactly what we wanted: the four engines [of the Report] went quite beyond what the Minister wanted." Leading the debate in the right direction pushed RCOL into a trajectory in which co-chair and commissioner goals were dominant, and away from the more narrow purpose that Cooke had envisaged.

Caplan (Interview, 1995) "happily" accepted some other limitations placed on RCOL's purview, such as confining the scope to elementary and secondary levels, but indicated that even the limitations were considered negotiable: "We did not do too much on education finance, because nobody in [RCOL] cared for it. [But] if we had somebody as a commissioner who liked tax matters, we might have done more". This inclination notwithstanding, RCOLers did venture into a controversial area related to taxes and education finance that was excluded explicitly from their purview. RCOL's recommendations in this area, discussed later, were far from welcomed by big city public boards and their supporters, and undoubtedly caught Cooke off guard when he perused the Report for the first time. Caplan added that he was also content with the limitation of not reopening constitutional issues related to Roman Catholic and francophone schooling: "Once you accept this, then the logic drives you to the recommendations we made on Roman Catholic and francophone issues." In other words, there would be little contestation of the demands of stakeholders from these two communities within RCOL. Of all the commissioners, Glaze
was probably the most disposed to pushing RCOL to study and make recommendations about the secondary school/post-secondary nexus, as she had a broad knowledge of issues relating to community colleges and universities (as her "bio" above attests). She even wanted the Commission to wade into the proposed merger of O.I.S.E. with the University of Toronto and to support O.I.S.E.'s relative autonomy threatened by the proposed shot-gun marriage engineered by Cooke and Pascal. The two co-chairs, however, were reluctant to include topics that ventured anywhere into the domain of post-secondary education. In short, the limitations placed upon RCOL by the mandate statement were generally not perceived as set in stone, and where RCOLers felt the need and could summon the will, they ventured beyond them.

The Policy Context

Because they are mandated to give policy advice, many royal commissions are future-oriented, making projections about what should be done in a policy domain, in the short- and long-term. But this future is connected to a past. Although every commission by definition has no "history" prior to its establishment, the particular policy domain it is called upon to study usually has a long history, or a succession of policies, in various states, that form a context within which a commission functions. Therefore, a commission's purview is often retrospective and present-oriented, assessing and evaluating the impact of past policies and judging the merits of stalled policy initiatives. In this section, I briefly examine some of the more important policy documents that formed the policy context for RCOL.

In a news release (MET, 1993b, p.3) issued on the day the formation of the Commission was announced, Cooke made two major points about policy context. The first of these concerned his determination that his agenda for educational reform was going forward in parallel to RCOL's inquiry. The implication of Cooke's statement was that these policy initiatives were beyond RCOL's purview, and that Cooke would not shift ministerial gears into neutral in order to accommodate RCOL. He emphasized that, while the Commission was in session, his Ministry would proceed with a series of initiatives, including province-wide testing of Grade 9 students, the circulation of the working document The Common Curriculum, Grades 1 to 9, the increased participation of parents in education [to be known as the Parents' Council], and further steps in French-language education.

Secondly, in the news release, Cooke clearly indicated he perceived a key purpose of the
Commission as a synthesizer of various policy pieces, recent and ongoing: "The time has come for a far-reaching review that will draw upon these previous reports and the ongoing initiatives of the Ministry" (MET, 1993b, p.3). In this vein, he noted that the last comprehensive review of Ontario's education system had been the Hall-Dennis report, Living and Learning, in 1968, formally known as The Report of the Provincial Committee on Aims and Objectives in the Schools of Ontario (Provincial Committee, 1968). Since then, he continued, a series of specialized reports that touch on a number of areas addressed more specific problems. Reports on education finance included H. Ian Macdonald's Report of the Commission on the Financing of Elementary and Secondary Education (Provincial Commission, 1985), the Third Report of the Select Committee On Education Finance (Select Committee, 1990), and the recommendations of the 1993 Fair Tax Commission, which urged major changes in how education is financed. The issues of relevance and dropouts had been addressed by George Radwanski in the Ontario Study for the Relevance of Education, and the Issue of Dropouts (Radwanski, 1987). The issue of public funding for independent schools was the topic of Bernard Shapiro's Report of the Commission on Private Schools in Ontario (Shapiro, 1985). French-language educational governance was studied in the report of the French Language Education Governance Group, better known as Cousineau report, with recommendations for separate governance structures for francophone education (MET, 1991). After Hall-Dennis, what these policy documents have in common is that none of them was fully implemented, and in his next news release Cooke is explicitly asking the Commission to review them, with the exception of finance issues, once again, to see if they might fit into an overall package of education reform.

Cooke could have added to this list of unfinished policy issues by including the perceived failure of the Teacher Education Council, Ontario (TECO, established in 1989), to reform teacher education and professional development, in the face of stiff resistance from various stakeholder groups, especially teacher federations and faculties of educations. Teacher federations had also blocked the Ministry's several attempts over the years to create a college of teachers (Researcher B, Interview, 1995).

Past Policies, Policy Documents, and Interpretation Within RCOL

As noted earlier, the co-chairs were not enthused with Cooke's assumption that RCOL would primarily concern itself with synthesizing stalemated policy initiatives, that RCOL was to be an enterprise
of putting old wine in new bottles. Nevertheless, policy documents, old and new, had to be consulted by RCOLErs because they addressed many of the same issues that were cropping up in public hearings and in internal deliberations. In other words, RCOL had to consult these documents because the problems they addressed still needed attention.

Equally as important, past policies may be construed in the public arena, rightly or wrongly, as problems in themselves. Without doubt, the contested legacy of Hall-Dennis haunted RCOLErs: it was not only the most seminal policy initiative with which RCOLErs had to contend, it was also the oldest policy mentioned in Cooke's news-release litany, a testimony to its symbolic longevity. But much of the Hall-Dennis report was never implemented, or implemented wrongly, and much of what is attributed to Hall-Dennis ignores this, according to Lloyd Dennis when he was invited to speak to RCOL commissioners in one of the many meetings for which notables were invited to 101 Bloor Street West.

Haphazardly implemented or not, Hall-Dennis was then, and remains today, the most potent symbol of a direction in Ontario education that is either revered or reviled. Not one RCOL public hearing would pass without explicit reference to it, most frequently cited by critics as the primal cause of perceived educational failure in Ontario (Observation notes, September to December, 1993). Within RCOL, Hall-Dennis also had strong symbolic connotations, with both educational and political meanings. Commissioners knew they would be tarred with the Hall-Dennis brush if they used words and concepts in the Report that evoked the earlier Living and Learning. For example, in a meeting with 'outside' editors to discuss the tone and style of language to be used in RCOL's Report, the following exchange took place (Observation notes, March 8, 1994):

_Bégîn:_ We know we'll have a problem with philosophy—we're child-centred but these words are loaded. _Editor 1:_ We'll put that on the list of 'no-no' words. _Murphy:_ This is one of the common problems—Hall-Dennis is a child of its time—we'll be out of 'sync' with the neo-conservative, individualistic tenor of our times. _Caplan:_ Our five commissioners are on the side of equity, not meanness. _Editor 2:_ You'll need a report that cuts across left and right ideologies; you'll need to map it out, and cut across conventions.

Four months later, Caplan (Observation notes, July 13, 1994) stated in a commissioners' meeting: "Everyone agrees on the need for excellence in the system. [The group of principals that met with the commissioners on July 7] talked to us like we were Hall-Dennis, but people want excellence now."

A perusal of the first volume of the RCOL Report gives a strong indication that the policy issues
and documents cited by Cooke were read, discussed, and debated within the ranks at RCOL, and revisited again in some of RCOL's recommendations that were essentially reiterations of the findings of these earlier, largely non-implemented, studies (e.g., francophone governance, college of teachers, some aspects of teacher education and professional development, and equitable financing of education). Other policy advice documents were also highly influential in influencing commissioner and researcher thinking. Three of these were issued by the Ontario Premier's Council that included representatives from business, labour, education, and community organizations. Competing in the New Global Economy (1998) and People and Skills in the New Global Economy (1990) consider Ontario's place in the global market and the role of schooling in promoting economic well-being. The RCOL Report, (1994, Vol.1, p.23) dismisses the assumption of these reports about a "cause-and-effect relation between schooling and prosperity that...is asserted rather than demonstrated". Instead, RCOL argued (Vol. 1, p.27) "that economic health is not primarily dependent on the skills and knowledge of the workforce, but economic health does help economic opportunity". Caplan was instrumental in writing this argumentation, and he more than once in public hearings reacted strongly against the idea that the purpose of education was to "reduce students to the level of widgets to be processed by the corporate world" (a paraphrase, Observation notes, November 1, 1993).

A report of the Premier's Council on Health, Well-Being, and Social Justice entitled Yours, Mine, and Ours, (1994), [a reference to changing family structures in Ontario], received a much more sympathetic hearing within RCOL. It discussed, among other things, education issues as they relate to larger questions of children's healthy development and growth. Bégin had served on this Council, and Ziegler, a researcher, had been a volunteer staffer. The logic of this report, that better quality of child care and stimulating early education experience help to promote school readiness and general well-being for children, was behind the thinking and argumentation for RCOL's "engine" of Early Childhood Education. In a commissioners' meeting, Murphy (Observation notes, July 19, 1994) advised the researcher who was writing this section of the Report to rein in her enthusiasm for Yours, Mine, and Ours: "Don't keep quoting [it]; use the original sources, and on ECE, don't start with child care, don't re-open that argument." In the context of internal deliberations on anti-racism and ethno-cultural issues, Stephen Lewis's 1993 Report on Race Relations was also a significant influence on Caplan, Glaze, and two researchers.
The Interpretation of Other Contexts

The political, social, and economic contexts of Ontario in the 1990s played a large role in deliberations about what should be said in the Report and what could be recommended. Researcher A (Interview, 1995) explained the differing contexts faced by Hall-Dennis and RCOL, touching upon money, authority, accountability, attitudes about change, diversity, and inclusion:

When Hall-Dennis came out in 1968, the economy was booming, and there was no shortage of money for educational reform, but RCOL was faced by the constraint of no new money. Hall-Dennis asked themselves: “What would we like to do?”, but RCOL was forced to ask: “What can we afford to do?” Back in the 1960s, the Ministry of Education's leadership and policy-making status in public education was unchallenged, and rooted in a deep moral authority. Today, the Ministry's leadership role is highly suspect within the educational community and its authority is challenged by the big boards, the teacher federations, and the media. Today there is the broader social issue of public anger towards all public institutions-- accountability is the structural manifestation of this anger.

...The years preceding Hall-Dennis had been characterized by decades of stability in the teaching profession, and teachers, caught up in the spirit of the 60s, were ripe for big changes... but RCOL’s reforms are addressed to teachers who are weary of change that has been unrelenting in the last decade and who are embittered by the Social Contract [that negated collective bargaining agreements]...RCOL was forced to walk a tightrope in times of great educational instability: how do you promote educational reform without further destabilizing the system?

Hall-Dennis never had to deal with the issue of diversity in the way that RCOL did. Look at the composition of the commissioners: Catholic, francophone, a student, a black. RCOL physically reassembled the new Ontario in which many more voices are clamouring to be heard.

The radically altered demographic and economic contexts in Ontario, and the increased pace of change, from the era of Hall-Dennis to the present, were articulated in the Report (RCOL Report, Vol.1, p. 25):

In the past 20 years, immigrants from Asia, Latin America, and Africa have outnumbered those from traditional European sources. The manufacturing sector that was once the well-spring of Ontario's prosperity is declining, and service industries are expanding. Not only is everything changing, the pace of change itself is increasing. And there, squarely at the centre of change, stands the school system.

A major issue not faced by Hall-Dennis but one that RCOL had to address was the realization that distinct limits to potential investment had recently been imposed on public education, and that optimism
had evaporated about an expansionary economy and abundant state revenues. Bégin addressed this issue by posing this question to her colleagues (Observation notes, April 18, 1994): "Can we conclude that limited resources are here to stay and that the problem is one of redistribution? Permanent limits to growth will lead to permanent tensions in the system. How do you use that tension?" Her "limits to growth" scenario did not impede, however, the support of commissioners for some recommendations they knew would be big ticket items. Glaze (Interview, 1995) reflected on the obvious costs entailed in the recommendation for Early Childhood Education:

We were in difficult times with no new money. We could not have made a number of costly recommendations because the public would view it as irresponsible. At the same time, we were writing a report that took the long view and we should not have felt so constrained in talking about possibilities. I don't know how much the cost of things influenced my decisions. I personally went with what was best: If we can't do it now it can be done in the future, but let it not be said that it was not documented. ECE would have been very costly, but we were passionate about this recommendation and we went ahead and did it anyway.

With a strategic frame of mind similar to Glaze's, Caplan (Interview, 1995) maintained that constraining economic and fiscal realities meant that RCOL could not "be another trillion dollar commission, [and we stayed away from many] big ticket items. Some things like ECE and the training of teachers will cost money but I believe RCOL had to say these things, even though I didn't believe that most of them would happen". Recommendations would thus be made with the certain knowledge that the fiscal constraints would not allow for their immediate implementation, but, taking the long view, when conditions permit, they should be implemented. Acknowledging this constraint was thus an implicit understanding shared by RCOLers, but this type of conditional thinking and hedging was not part of the argumentation of the Report that is largely persuasive in tone.

Researcher F (Interview, 1995) adds a "worldview" contrast between the contexts of Hall-Dennis and of RCOL. When Hall-Dennis was completed, the economic future looked boundlessly certain and education was seen as being the key vehicle to promote social mobility, assumptions that are classically modernist. By contrast, "the first part of the (RCOL) Report pays attention to the uncertainty about the relationship between education and employment, and about education 'paying off...and about more voices needing to be paid attention to...[This argumentation] is essentially post-modernist". This "post-modernist" reading had distinct impacts on the argumentation around the purposes of schooling and in
the inclusion of outside voices, both inside and outside the Commission.

RCOL and the Minister

In the provincial political context, commissioners and researchers all showed an awareness that Minister Cooke wanted the Report to be delivered on time, by December 31, 1994. By that juncture, the New Democratic Party Government's mandate would be drawing to a close and it was anticipated within RCOL that an election date would be determined soon after the New Year, 1995. The government's ratings in the polls had been nothing short of disastrous for months, and the Minister communicated to the co-chairs that, given the current high level of public interest in public education and the work of RCOL, that the Report would be rolled into the NDP election platform. Caplan (Interview, 1995) acknowledged this, but added: "We were writing for whatever government [of the day]...I had no great hopes for [a re-election] of the NDP."

Minister Cooke was no Tony Solipo: his predecessor in office was not comfortable in his portfolio and had aggravated the sense of rudderless direction at MET. Cooke, on the other hand, had a clear sense of his agenda for reform and where he wanted to position the Ministry to promote change. Cooke’s agenda was evident in a succession of pronouncements and initiatives, particularly in the areas of student assessment, standards, accountability, information technology, and governance. Some of these policy intentions or pronouncements immediately preceded RCOL’s establishment, and some of them unfolded in tandem. Beyond the framing of the terms of reference, Cooke’s input into the RCOL process took place, in camera, in meetings with the Commissioners, sometimes accompanied by his Deputy Charles Pascal, a former O.I.S.E. professor and former president of a community college in Ontario (Interview, 1996). This type of input was chosen because a more publicly-visible input might have led to the perception that Cooke was interfering with the arm's-length relationship between the Commission and the Ministry, a distance the co-chairs adamantly wanted to maintain. As Cooke observed, the co-chairs would tolerate no interference from MET, and they were stingy in the amount of information they shared with the minister about where RCOL was headed (Interview, 1996):

I was involved in the consultation around the terms of reference and I made some recommendations about what the public consultation process would be like. [Beyond that] I had a few meetings with the commissioners...We did it without media, in camera. The reason I didn't want to give a public presentation of what I thought should be in the Royal
Commission report was because the first question from the media would have been: "If this is what you think you should be doing, why are you having a Royal Commission?", and if the Royal Commission came down and incorporated a lot of my recommendations, then I think there would be an accusation that the Royal Commission had been tainted. Gerry and Monique weren't gung-ho to have a public presentation and before the report was printed I got to meet with them and got a report of some of the things that would be in the report but not a complete [picture]. They were ferocious in their demand that this thing be arm's length and I agreed with them. I would say that Lynn McLeod [the Liberal opposition leader] got more briefings from Monique about the Royal Commission than I did, which is fine, but it was pretty independent.

In his meetings with the Commissioners, Cooke (Interview, 1996) spoke of several initiatives that he thought were worthy of inclusion in, and exclusion from, the Report:

I put forward the reduction in the number of school boards, and the idea of an independent testing agency. I didn't talk about the college of teachers. I talked a lot about the early literacy intervention and [an advisory type of] parental involvement in schools which was another area where we deviated a bit from the Commission's recommendations. The Ministry was not prepared to give schools over to parent councils because it would have opened the door for groups like the Coalition For Education Reform and some of those groups that aren't helpful to public education. The areas we emphasized were province-wide curriculum and testing, literacy, and parental involvement.

In the spring of 1994, the commissioners were moving independently to similar positions as Cooke's on curriculum development and an assessment agency. They would not bite, however, on reducing the number of school boards, believing that compared with other jurisdictions in Canada, Ontario was not over-governed in this respect (an argument discussed at length in the Report, Vol.4, p.109-117; the internal debate on governance is featured in Chapter 6). Cooke's numerous public pronouncements, during the lifetime of the Commission, that he wanted a drastic reduction in the number of school boards, and that RCOL "was looking into this", may indeed have backfired. The co-chairs resented being boxed in by his presumption, and showed little sympathy for his amalgamation crusade. Caplan (Interview, 1995), however, did share Cooke's distrust of groups like the Coalition for Educational Reform and the Organization for Quality Education, characterizing them as socially and politically "conservative" as well as "hysterical." As I point out below in the debate on governance, Caplan also shared Cooke's belief that local school councils should be advisory and not decision-making, precisely because a direct involvement in decision-making would give such reform groups an advantaged position to impose their own agendas
on local schooling.

The National and International Contexts for Educational Reform

The RCOL Report (Vol. 1, p. 37) noted that the demand for educational reform is in the air, not just in Ontario but across the country and around the world. Clearly, the many powerful factors that have coalesced to put educational change so high on Ontario's political agenda, economic and technological change, employment uncertainty, changing family structures, have had the same impact in every part of the world.

The Report (Vol. 1, p. 36) briefly surveyed reform efforts in Great Britain, New Zealand, Edmonton and Alberta, Dade County, Florida, Chicago, and New Brunswick. Though not referred to in this section of the Report, commissioners also discussed reforms taking place in Kentucky, New York State, Quebec, Manitoba and British Columbia. Glaze, in conjunction with a study trip with other educators, visited England and reported to the commissioners her findings on the tumultuous educational reforms gripping that country. Murphy and Bharti made a trip to Alberta and to British Columbia to speak with Ministry of Education officials, administrators, and academics on initiatives there. In British Columbia the College of Teachers, the first in Canada, was of particular interest because a similar idea was brewing inside RCOL. Respondents in British Columbia informed the two commissioners that the governance of the B.C. College was perceived as being dominated by elected representatives of the British Columbia Teachers Federation. The commissioners also learned that many of the more progressive and radical aspects of the Year 2000 initiatives, the B.C. Ministry response to the Sullivan Commission (1989), were being challenged mainly by parental groups, and in response, that the Ministry there was amending or jettisoning key aspects of those initiatives. Murphy and Bharti also spoke with Simon Fraser University Professor Emeritus Norman Robinson, who told them that his research on parental involvement in school affairs showed that most parents didn't want a decision-making role in school decision-making. Rather, he contended, most parents were motivated to engage in forthright communication about the progress of their own children, and about what steps schools would undertake to improve achievement or behavioural performance, if necessary. This British Columbia experience was taken seriously, as I point out later, when RCOLers discussed their own ideas about the governance of the College of Teachers, about the gathering national debate on progressive educational ideology, and about local school governance.

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Researchers were dispatched to Dade County and to Kentucky, to learn first hand about, respectively, decentralization of decision-making to the school level, and the process of mandated reform efforts. Jim Downey, the co-chair of the New Brunswick Royal Commission on Learning (1993) and soon to be President of Waterloo University, visited RCOL and spoke to the commissioners about his experiences as a commissioner and that Commission's findings. John Meyer, a professor at the University of Windsor, discussed with researchers his recent first-hand observations on the Australian educational system. A number of British educators and administrators visited RCOL and informed commissioners about reform efforts in the United Kingdom. Commissioners also visited with officials at the Erie Board of Co-operative Educational Services (BOCES), in New York State, and discussed alternative methods of organizing educational support systems (Observation notes, January to July, 1994).

Many of the above reform efforts were attempted in the recent past, and as the Report noted (Vol.1, p.37), "the long-term effect of a range of educational reforms on educators has yet to be assessed. But it would be fair to say that so far, all of these initiatives have received distinctly mixed reviews." In other words, nothing that the commissioners had seen, heard, or read about educational reform outside of Ontario was considered so stellar as to be worth emulating. The strongly-shared understanding that commissioners drew from their perusal of national and international contexts was that no external model, no single solution, nor any set of pre-packaged reforms borrowed eclectically from here and there, would answer Ontario's needs (Caplan; Bégin, Murphy, Glaze, Interviews, 1995). Caplan summed up this thinking: "...[N]o-one has come up with that one simple idea that will turn the whole thing around. That's because no simple solution exists. If it did, we'd all be getting aboard with great enthusiasm and relief" (Short Version, p.6). If ideas would not be "imported" from other jurisdictions, with the exception of some do's and don'ts, then it would logically fall to commissioners and researchers to create an alternative blueprint for educational reform that was grounded in their understanding of the Ontario context.

The Expanded Mandate and Its Subject Matter: Certainty, Uncertainty, and Ambiguity

Mackay's observation on the loose connection between the government-defined mandate and terms of reference, and a commission's interpretation of them, certainly has validity for how the RCOL commissioners interpreted their mandate. That author noted that: "The terms of reference for commissions of inquiry are usually broadly stated and governments have little control over the shape or
direction of the inquiry" (1990, p.34). RCOL's mandate statement was less broadly stated and more specific than some as a result of the labours of Minister Cooke, his Deputy Pascal, and consulting stakeholder groups; in fact, the questions posed in the terms of reference were structured to elicit RCOL's specific response to four areas related to program, school organization, vision, and accountability. But the mandate statement, and the Minister's own agenda, did not reflect what the co-chairs wanted to accomplish during their tenure. They dismissed their governmental mandate as "sexy," "opportunistic," and "phony," and viewed it as a stepping stone at best. They were also highly sceptical of Cooke's agenda, which they considered "his" and "not ours." The Report went well beyond the mandate, offering a vision of four engines and addressing an issue that was identified as beyond its purview, education finance.

A critical reason why RCOLers deviated from the mandate stemmed from the exercise of commissioner free will, coupled with a determination that their energies would not be largely spent "filling in the blanks" by confining themselves to a review and synthesis of stalled policy initiatives. Instead, RCOL commissioners committed themselves to use the inquiry, research, and discussion processes to create something that reflected their own thinking and discretion. Caplan (Interview, 1995) summed up this determination:

We saw the Commission as an advocacy vehicle...to lead the debate about education in the right direction...In the end we did exactly what we wanted: the four engines [of the Report] went quite beyond what the Minister wanted.

In Caplan's case, demarcating between Cooke and himself was made easier, no doubt, by the former's perception of the latter's deviation from NDP principles. Cameron (1993) drew a correlation between the broad mandate of the Pepin-Robarts Task Force, and the subsequent choice of its members to stray from governmental direction that limited their activities to public consultation, with the "ill-defined" nature of its subject matter, national unity. Mawhinney (1993, p.21) describes a similar "condition of uncertainty" in an ill-defined domain of public education:

...Research on educational decision making confirms that policy makers generally pursue a multitude of competing and conflicting goals (Firestone & Herriott, 1982; Townsend, 1990; Wise, 1993). School systems are often faced with the tensions created by balancing goals related to administrative efficiency with goals related to equity (Marshall, Mitchell & Wirt, 1989). Policy goals are often ambiguous, and change as conditions change.
(Patterson, Purkey & Parker, 1986). Further, state/provincial, and district-level goals are often quite unconnected with what occurs in the classroom (Lortie, 1975; Patterson, Purkey & Parker, 1986; Weick, 1976). Research confirms that, rather than being set by decision makers at the top of the hierarchy, policy goals emerge through a process of bargaining and compromise among forces both inside and outside the educational policy system (Bacharach & Mitchell, 1987; Bowe, Ball & Gold, 1992; Barrett & Fudge, 1981).

While in general I cannot dispute that the domain of education policy is characterized by much ill-definition and uncertainty, the findings of this dissertation would suggest that such a description for the publicly-funded system of Ontario is too broad; rather, one should look at which issues are at stake and how they are perceived by particular groups of stakeholders.

In this respect, the goal articulation of multiple components of Ontario’s public education system exhibits varying degrees of certainty/uncertainty. Both the Roman Catholic and francophone presentations in the hearings were characterized by a high degree of certainty as to the goals of their particular components, and the specific nature of their demands. The Roman Catholics were consistent in their desire to sustain and enhance the autonomy of their system, eschewing schemes for "confederation" with public boards, and they consistently supported the maintenance of preferential hiring, of a more equitable funding formula and taxation system, and for a secured place at the MET table for planning in sensitive areas such as curriculum. Francophones were equally certain about issues that they thought counted, relentlessly justifying their arguments in terms of cultural survival with the following themes: the need to establish independent governance structures for francophones, the need for adequate funding, and a conception of schooling that focuses on cultural development. For representatives of these two components that collectively represent over one-third of all the students in the system, the articulation of goals and values was anything but uncertain. For the public component representing the other two-thirds of students and their parents, however, the characterization of a "cacophony" of values and goals is probably more justified, but even within this component the hearings gave ample testimony of a forthright articulation, by many groups and individuals, of deeply-held values, goals, and ideas about education that are uncompromising in their certainty. An abiding duality of certainty/uncertainty exists in the politics of Ontario education that confronted RCOL commissioners, and the Report reflects this tension.

Feldman (1989) makes a critical distinction between "uncertainty" and "ambiguity" that can help
elucidate the challenge that RCOL faced in interpreting the mandate, contexts, substantive domains, and issues of its members' own choosing. According to this perspective, problems of uncertainty can be solved by acquiring appropriate information; problems of ambiguity, however, can ultimately only be satisfied by the process of interpretation, debate, and evaluation:

Uncertainty can be resolved by obtaining certain specifiable pieces of information...Because the information needed to resolve uncertainty is often either very expensive or impossible to obtain, we have developed methods of analysis that allow us to make good guesses about what that information might be. (pp. 4-5)

Ambiguity, by contrast, cannot be resolved simply by gathering information. Ambiguity is the state of having many ways of thinking about the same circumstances or phenomena. Thus, more information is not directly relevant to resolving ambiguity...That determination...depends upon a process of interpretation [and] includes discussions of what is relevant as well as what value to give the many relevant features of the question. (p. 5)

Cairns' (1990) observations from Chapter 2 about uncertainty and ambiguity within the Macdonald Commission bear a strong resemblance to Feldman's (1989) description of the same concepts. Cairns noted (1990, p. 91) that Macdonald's mandate, to study Canada's economic prospects in the mid-1980s and beyond, and to make recommendations to ensure that Canada remained globally competitive, was so vast and ill-defined that commission members spent two-thirds of their time pondering which directions they should take. Ambiguity and "pervasive uncertainty" defined the organization, as goals were unclear and the relationship of tasks to one another were nebulous. While the central expectation of the mandate was a written report, its content and style were only "dimly...discerned" by commission members for much of the time. The degree of the ambiguity of the subject matter under inquiry is reflected in the mirror image of a commission's equally-ambiguous tasks and structure. For RCOL too, as I later detail, uncertainty and ambiguity defined the roles of commissioners and researchers, the tasks before them, and the jerry-built organization they constructed to accomplish these tasks.

Peters and Barker (1993) underscore that the work of interpretation is complex and shrouded in ambiguity, because fact, opinion, and value are inherently intertwined:

...[M]uch of the agenda-setting literature and the literature on social problems would argue that even our definitions of what are the problems facing society would be, in effect, dependent upon opinion rather than any objective facts...the world does not come to the policy-maker with neat packages labelled 'fact' and 'opinion': the two are frequently
closely intertwined.

[S]ocial indicators divorced from a normative element which provides them with meaning are not really useful in the policy process. Thus given that public policy-making is an inherently normative act - choosing what is important and what are desirable states of society - attempts at isolating fact from opinion or values are most unlikely to be productive. (p. 2)

From Feldman and from Peters and Barker we can infer that the work domain of RCOL was defined by large measures of uncertainty that required pertinent information for resolution. We also can infer that the swirl of fact, opinion, and values that defined contested visions, goals, and policies of public education meant that ambiguity necessarily characterized much of the work of RCOL. In other words, RCOL as a policy-advice instrument was less concerned with fact-finding than with interpretation and norm-setting.

Uncertainty and ambiguity also permeated RCOL because of the "outsiderness" of four of the five commissioners: RCOL was not an enterprise in "expert problem-solving." As defined by Leithwood and Steinbach (1995), expertise in problem-solving consists of three parts:

(a) the possession of complex knowledge and skill; (b) its reliable application in actions intended to accomplish generally endorsed goal states; and (c) a record of goal accomplishment, as a consequence of those actions, which meets standards appropriate to the occupation or field of practice, as judged by clients and other experts in the field. (p. 13)

Expertise in this viewpoint focuses on a tight relationship of theory, practice, and goal attainment, a notion that is by definition the domain of practising insiders of a given professional field. Outsiderness, on the other hand, brings with it the notion of a deliberate detachment from the three elements of expertise described above. Within RCOL, only Glaze had a detailed, insider knowledge base of Ontario elementary and secondary school issues, having worked in both public and Roman Catholic systems as a teacher, counsellor, and administrator. Murphy's knowledge base of Catholic education issues was comprehensive but he had no direct experience as a teacher or administrator in K-OAC. Bharti entered RCOL as a seventeen year-old student, but was experienced as an activist in student circles locally and provincially. Caplan had left academe in the 1970s to pursue other career paths, including politics and policy analysis. Bégin, after a career as a civil servant and a federal politician, came to RCOL on leave as Dean of Health Sciences at the University of Ottawa. The commissioners, then, had to move through the ABC's of the various domains of a complex public education system, be indoctrinated in the buzz-
words and arcane vocabulary, and learn to recognize the bumps in the political terrain, finally to reach a plateau of knowledge sufficient enough to commit themselves to what should be contained in the Report. Strong-willed and independent-minded, the commissioners would not defer to researchers' expertise and preferences without first undergoing a crash course in the broad issues, and in the minutiae, of public education.

Constraining Contexts and the Policy Space

Perhaps the most daunting contextual factor, and external constraint, facing RCOL was the issue of "no new money," that as part of the social services envelope, public education was facing the foreseeable future with relatively less public investment. Although Caplan (Interview, 1995) recognized that RCOL could not be another "trillion dollar" commission, a sentiment supported by his co-commissioners, the commissioners were not sympathetic to the efficiency agenda of Minister Cooke, in particular his desire for a massive reduction of school boards. Rather, to recall the words of Glaze (Interview, 1995), the commissioners chose to "take the long view": that some of their costly recommendations, such as for the early childhood education program, should be implemented incrementally, but implemented nevertheless. This perspective recalls to mind Cairns' observation (1990, p.105) that commissions need to transcend "the pressures of the immediate issues that typically dominate the personal agenda of petitioners." In this particular case, the petitioner was Minister Cooke. Taking the long view may have been the stated strategy of RCOL, but as I chronicle later, the failure to grapple more with the question of costs, constraining budgets, and the notion of efficiency would later give rise to a government rejection of RCOL's position on school boards, to a rejection of some recommendations as too costly, and to some criticism from policy makers and academe.

In the context of public policy, an important concept that illuminates the uncertainty and ambiguity of the terrain travelled upon by RCOLers is the notion of "policy space" which denotes:

a set of policies that are so closely interrelated that it is not possible to make useful descriptions of or analytic statements about one of them without taking the other elements of the set into account...The structure of a policy space includes both the internal arrangements of its elements and the linkages and intersections among them. (Majone, 1989, pp.158-159)

The public education system in this sense has a highly-articulated policy space. Internally, schools are
embedded in a complex web of inter-locking policies that envelope schools, school boards, the ministry, and ultimately the government. The domains assigned by mandate such as vision, program, school, and system organization have obvious horizontal connections that feed into one another in reciprocal fashion. The present state of public education is partially the result of past policy implementation, however piecemeal (e.g., Hall-Dennis), and of policy ideas not acted upon (e.g., much of the Radwanski Report) or waiting for revitalization (e.g., the College of Teachers; recommendations from the Shapiro Commission). Thus much of present policy is a reflection of, and a reaction to, past policy initiatives, undertaken or neglected: policy becomes its own cause, as Wildavsky (1979) noted. Public education is also connected to the external policy environment in numerous ways. For example, education is part of the "social services" policy space, and policies that originate in public health and welfare have an impact on school life, for better and for worse (e.g., the issue of AIDS; child abuse policies; the "inter-envelope" struggle for funding). The "crowdedness" of this policy space means that policies among the elements become more interdependent, and policy solutions in one area "begat new problems in the form of policy overlaps, jurisdictional conflicts, and unanticipated consequences" (Majone, 1989, p. 159).

The Report gives ample testimony to an understanding that the policy space of the social services envelope was itself a "problem" that needed addressing:

While we endorse...[the policy provisions as stated in Yours, Mine and Ours, about the need for greater inter-ministerial coordination of policy] and urge the government to move ahead on these lines as quickly as possible, we go further. If large numbers of children continue to suffer the effects of poverty; if teachers and schools are made responsible for delivering an increasing number of social programs, in addition to traditional academic programs; if agencies funded by other departments of government continue to define their responsibilities as separate from schools; then the government, which has the power to redeploy resources and to change mandates, has failed. (Vol. 4, p. 122)

If the education policy space is "crowded" and "highly-articulated," it is also marked by a high degree of disjointedness between policy intention and implementor behaviour, as Mahwinney (1993) alluded to above. Within the public education sector, policy enactment is neither the exclusive purview of ministries, school boards, or school administrations, nor is policy enactment all planned. Much teaching takes place literally behind close doors — tradition, present practice, and a large degree of professional autonomy bolster the image of teaching as a covert activity: much policy activity is "unplanned" (Majone, 1989, p. 160) or buffered. When a large measure of discretion is required by implementors for task completion
as in public education to a large degree, "street-level bureaucrats" like 120,000 Ontario teachers are policy-makers in their own right. They may choose to follow the advice of an O.I.S.E. professor who regularly counsels administrators and teachers to ignore much in the way of new policy initiatives they may find irksome, and to carry on their duties as usual: "Ignore it and it will go away" (Musella, 1995, in conversation). The profound disjointedness between authoritative intent and de facto practice presented a particular challenge to RCOL, one that was frankly acknowledged:

> Transforming schools...ultimately depends on teachers. No significant improvements are likely to take place without the active participation of teachers and other educators who actually create and sustain the conditions for learning in schools. All the educational policy changes and curriculum documents in the world will have little effect unless teachers use them in the classroom. All the system-wide testing will have no effect either, unless teachers use the data to improve and refine their programs and teaching methods. It's because of this indispensable role that we identified teacher development as one of our four engines of change. (The Report, Short Version, p. 14)

The above treatment of context focuses on its impact on RCOL thinking, but RCOL also influenced its external context or environment. Organizations, or at least those members charged with mediating the boundary spaces with the environment, are not without resources to, in turn, reciprocally influence their environment, to target particular elements of that environment and seek to win them over or at least to neutralize them (Mintzberg, 1979). This notion is also critical to the neo-institutional understanding of organizational analysis (Dimaggio and Powell, 1991; Pal, 1992). In the case of RCOL, to use one example, winning over media opinion (a property of the external environment) was a clear goal for RCOL's communication strategy, a topic I will address in Chapter 7, The Construction of Multiple Purposes. In the reckonings I offer, this strategy was largely successful, and thus the media, an important shaper of political and public opinion, came "on side" just when public and media cynicism about RCOL was at its early peak. The boundary between RCOL and its task environment was semi-permeable: as an organization with a multifaceted public presence built for policy inquiry, and with commissioners appointed to represent particular political and/or community interests, RCOL's task environment was explicitly more permeable than regular branches or committees of the government. On the other hand, RCOL was also a public organization with a relatively short "shelf-life" and limited resources, and it would be an exaggeration to suggest that this Commission possessed the environment-influencing capabilities attributed to more stable, state-based institutions.
CONCLUDING REMARKS

In Chapter 3, I opened with a discussion of the players with RCOL and the composition of the Commission and analyzed how two biases (progressive and insider/outsider) were important sources of unity/disunity within the Commission. Next, I proceeded to discuss several contextual factors and how they were interpreted by RCOLers including the mandate and genesis of RCOL, policy and other external contexts, the relationship of RCOLers to Minister Cooke and national and international contexts. I also probed the relevance of the notions of certainty, uncertainty, and ambiguity in the understanding of these contexts. In Chapter 4, I present a discussion on RCOL activities that occupied RCOLers for the latter half of 1993 and the first couple of months in 1994: orientation, public hearings, school visits, media relations and outreach.
CHAPTER 4 - ORIENTATION, PUBLIC HEARINGS, SCHOOL VISITS, MEDIA, AND OUTREACH

In Chapter 4 I address and analyze the findings on four elements of Commission activity for the second half of 1993, with some spillover into early 1994: the orientation process (May-August 1993); public hearings (September to mid-December 1993); and media and outreach which spanned both these years.

THE ORIENTATION PERIOD

During the period of orientation, Bégin (Interview, 1995) recalled being "fed like a goose by a number of speakers" from stakeholder group presentations that MET Deputy Minister Charles Pascal had arranged. Bégin also said that Pascal gave the commissioners "an exciting speech" and a briefing document with a table of contents that was "dead on" target for the eventual topics that RCOL would address. Researcher C (Interview, 1995) and some other researchers claimed to have never seen this document, an observation that would seem to undermine the impact that the briefing document would have in shaping the direction of the Report, as the role of some researchers evolved to writing major sections of the latter document.

The basic structure of RCOL was also articulated at this time. Hutcheon was seconded from MET as executive director from day one, to be followed by di Cecco in August 1993, and soon other secondments would come: for researchers (Summers, Lindhout, Caron-Réaume) and administrative employees (Graham and support staff). Watson and Ziegler were hired in May by the co-chairs, without input from the other commissioners, a decision that rankled the other commissioners who felt they should have had a say in the matter (Bégin, Interview, 1995). Other researchers would join in the fall: Burnett, McGowan, and myself (evolving to the status of researcher, on top of my participant observer's role.)

The budget for RCOL had been established prior to the Order in Council, and was in the range of $3,000,000 for the duration of the process. On instructions from MET, it was to be administered by the executive director. This figure, I was told, proved inadequate two-thirds of the way through the process, and the actual costs were higher, although I have not been privy to how much the cost overrun
amounted to. I was also informed that Diane Laframboise, then a freelance journalist at the Toronto Star, applied under the Freedom of Information Act to find out about RCOL's budget and expenditures, but was foiled because the arm's-length status meant that FOI procedures were not applicable while the Commission was still in operation.

After these orientation tasks were accomplished by late June 1993, the commissioners absented themselves from RCOL, until late August 1993. During those summer months, the few researchers on hand prepared a briefing document called "The Research Binder" that included research literature related to the mandate areas. They also began to outline discussion papers for internal discussion, and made the first attempts to contact outside scholars who would be willing to write the commissioned papers that would later be published as the Background Papers of the Commission. With a start made on all these projects, the researchers and administrative staff also took some time off for holidays, girding themselves for the public hearings that commenced in September 1993.

Orientation: Micropolitics and Rule-Making

The orientation phase from May 1993 to the end of August 1993 was mainly devoted to member orientation and rule-making among the commissioners rather than orientation to the knowledge base (the efforts of the initial skeletal research staff notwithstanding). In the overall scheme of things, the orientation period was the "sitzkrieg" (phony war) before the "blitzkrieg" (lightning war) that would commence in the fall with the onslaught of the public hearings. One consequence of this organizational sitzkrieg would mean that the public hearings would constitute the first substantive indoctrination in public education for most commissioners.

Some aspects of the orientation period have another significance, however, as they set the micropolitical tone and defined the nature of commissioner decision-making for the rest of RCOL's short life. "Micropolitics" is used here in the sense articulated by Anderson and Herr (1993): "the study of the less visible, behind the scenes, negotiations of power" within any social system or organization, that explores the "subjective reality" of individuals within those entities. Power, Burbules (1986, p. 97) notes, is "a relation that is not simply chosen (or avoided) but made more or less necessary by the circumstances under which persons come together." RCOL was the circumstance that threw together these individuals from different backgrounds and interests, directing them to try to articulate a vision about public
education. Each RCOLer had ideas and values to protect and promote, and each of them would find the whirl of tasks a relentless assault on body, mind and soul. Out of these twin conditions of the political struggle over ideas, values, and interests as well as personal politics of survival and very human idiosyncrasies and foibles, emerged a micropolitical exercise of power that, despite the rhetoric about "win-win" power sharing, was often a zero-sum game, civilities dispensed with, in which someone lost, at least for the time being. The resources for this exercise of power sprung from the unequal share of formal authority, perceived expertise, and institutional affiliation. While some micropolitical activity was clear and abrupt, engendering heated exchanges and stifled anger in RCOL's conference room, much of it was long-term and more subtle, floating in the hallways, offices, and informal networks. A large share of micropolitical activity was partially veiled to this observer during the months of listening to and watching the individual and collective behaviour demonstrated in speech, the written word, action, visage, and gesture. This phenomenological understanding of micropolitics and power will be expanded upon throughout this study.

During the orientation period one of the first decisions made by the commissioners was to strive for a majority report, as tolerating minority reports, they thought, would undermine their need to garner widespread support for their own collective report, especially one addressed to a broad audience whose focus of interest was already beset by more than its share of conflictive politics and racked with dissensus. Some researcher-related decisions had a large ripple effect: the hiring of two key researchers without the consent of all commissioners; the aforementioned organization of the research team not only along a subject matter criterion, but also along interests tied to community (Roman Catholic, francophone); and the secondment of researcher personnel from MET without the consent of the co-chairs. Bégin (Interview, 1995) said that Caplan resisted her and Murphy's wishes, and this created a "mini-crisis within RCOL... [Caplan's] personal biases or hang-ups played a major role in this...RCOL was short-lived, volatile and fragile, and there was very little time to work out these problems." Caplan later facilitated the entry of a researcher to help address concerns of an ethno-cultural and equity nature, and this meant that at least three researchers' identities were rooted in three different communities, although their professional breadths of vision went well beyond community-bound issues (Researcher C, Interview, 1995). Besides initiating a cleft among commissioners that never altogether healed, these researcher-related decisions in effect branded researchers in the eyes of commissioners as "Yours, Mine, Ours, and
Theirs," to make a play on words of the title of an ubiquitously-quoted Ontario government policy document of-the-day.

Another decision-related conflict stemmed from status, as part-time commissioners sought to upgrade their status to full-time. In the context of projected work load, including days spent on the road in the public hearings phase, and projected commitments to internal deliberations, their lot as commissioners was not much different than that of the co-chairs. Although Minister Cooke did not agree to this change in status and of compensation, an internal decision was reached that would partially soften the blow of this negative response, whereby a consensus of at least three commissioners would be necessary for a major policy decision. In terms of formal decision-making power, neither co-chair, nor an alliance of co-chairs, would be allowed to prevail over the wishes of the other commissioners on major decisions; alleged infidelity to this decision would give rise to further inter-commissioner conflict. A positive aspect of this fight was that the commissioners would be guided by democratic principles in reaching a consensus about major decisions; a negative aspect was that the Commission would lack a clear decision-making mechanism or executive capacity and having two strong-willed co-chairs did not improve the chances for consensus-making. It was precisely this deficiency in decision-making that rebellious researchers thought was at the root of much of the lack of direction at issue in an April 1994 confrontation between the co-chairs and three researchers, a topic addressed below in a treatment of internal deliberations.

THE HEARINGS

The public consultation phase was at its peak from September 1993 to December 1993, and includes the public hearings, school visits, communications via the media, and various outreach projects. In order to help structure the public input for the hearings, the commissioners had researchers and communications staff prepare an information brochure, "Learning", which explained the mandate, invited people and groups to participate, and listed a schedule of formal public hearings. Advertisements were placed in local newspapers inviting people to the hearings. Press releases were issued and journalists were invited to discuss issues with the commissioners. Special mailings went to women's groups, ethno-cultural associations, and groups for the disabled.

For 12 weeks in the fall of 1993, 1,396 groups and individuals in 27 cities and towns across the
province made oral submissions in school gyms or auditoriums and board offices. They represented the broadest swath of "inside" and "outside" stakeholders and they discussed every conceivable issue related to public schooling:

Parents, teachers, students, trustees, and school administrators came, as did representatives of the business community, francophone groups, multicultural organizations, aboriginal groups, unions, colleges, and universities. We also heard from, among others, librarians, social workers, police officers, doctors, and members of religious groups, and many others, with views they wanted to share... Many presenters were passionate and articulate, knowledgeable and persuasive (RCOL Report, Vol.1, p.11).

From September 27 to December 15, 1993, commissioners and assorted researchers, support staff, communications people, sound technicians, and translators drove in vans (sometimes with me at the wheel) or flew to: Thunder Bay (2 days), Sioux Lookout, Kenora/Keewatin, Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie, North Bay, Toronto (8 days), London, Windsor, Sarnia, Chatham, Hamilton (2 days), Guelph, St. Catherines, Kitchener, Welland, Scarborough, Oshawa, Ottawa (2 days), Kingston, Cornwall, Peterborough, Hawkesbury, Newmarket, Markham, North York, East York, City of York, and Mississauga. Timmins, Moosonee, and Moose Factory were visited in the first three months of 1994. Early each morning during the hearings, RCOLers and support staff would arrive at their destinations, unpack their equipment and information packages and brochures, tape the schedule of presentations on an entry-way door, adorn commissioners' tables with green cloths and the RCOL logo and name plates, ready the microphones, set up the sound recording and translation booth, and with a prompt introduction from a co-chair or commissioner, declare the proceedings open. Usually starting around nine or ten in the morning, the hearings would often end twelve hours later in the evening, with very short breaks in the morning and afternoon sessions, and an hour or hour and a half off each for lunch and supper.

Most presentations were limited to 10 minutes (with a few special presentations at 20 minutes), including question time from the commissioners. Bégin (Interview, 1995) thought this time allotment was inadequate. Presenters, with a few exceptions, got "on the list" on a first-come, first-serve basis. Thus a parent, student, or anyone on the list would be allotted the same time as a director of education or a chair of a large school board. Presenters were obligated to phone RCOL's toll-free number to make these arrangements. Many who phoned were disappointed, as the demand for presentation time outweighed
the number of hours in a day by a wide margin. In some cases, an extra day for hearings was pencilled in because of this demand, such as the second visit to Ottawa, and an initially unplanned trip to Timmins, at the urging of the local francophone community.

On several occasions, commissioners would tackle the great demand by splitting up into concurrent sessions in one building, or more often, assigning two teams of commissioners and the RCOL entourage to two different hearings, in different cities, on the same day. Because of split-hearings, the problem of the left hand of the commissioners not knowing what the right hand was doing was partially solved through informal discussion afterwards, by distributing presenters' briefs considered most interesting to colleagues, and by consulting the summaries of presentations which were usually made available soon after the individual hearings. Most presenters complied with the request that they make copies of their briefs for each of the commissioners, one for the researcher who would dutifully word-process key points of the brief and discussion into a laptop, and one copy for the files. With the exception of Glaze, the commissioners were bilingual, and a switch to English or French presented no obstacle to them. For those RCOLers and participants without such a facility, a simultaneous translation would pour forth from quickly-distributed earphones.

Although for the most part outsiders to the issues, politics, and specialized language of publicly-funded education in Ontario, the commissioners, in particular the co-chairs, maintained a sober scepticism towards claims made in the hearings. This attitude was shaped no doubt by the general scepticism about experts and insider knowledge that pervaded the hearings on all sorts of issues. Rarely would a hearing go by without at least one presenter exclaiming (or in words to the effect) to the commissioners: "Beware of anyone who begins a talk with 'the research shows'." The 'lay' voices in the hearings were often cogent and incisive, bearing witness to a close and sometimes withering scrutiny of the issues at hand, frequently blurring the boundary between insider and outsider knowledge.

The commissioners were for the most part respectful listeners, and patient discussants. On the few occasions when Caplan took an argumentative tone with presenters he viewed as being "simple-solution" advocates or right-wing biased, he would be duly chastized in private by fellow commissioners or by Diana Crosbie, the communications consultant, whose personal lecture to Caplan on proper co-chair decorum I witnessed after the first set of public hearings held at Cardinal Carter Secondary School in North York. To this end, the commissioners were coached by an "animatrice" in one session on how to
interact with presenters (Caplan, Interview, 1995). Attentive listening, discussing, recording, analyzing, and translating for 10 to 12 hours a day, several days a week for 12 weeks, packing and unpacking, and the attendant travel in all sorts of weather, make for an exhausting enterprise: Bégin (Interview, 1995) described the process as a "killer schedule," made all the more so for her as she was ill for a few weeks during the hearings. At the end of each evening, weary RCOLers would pack up their belongings, head for a nearby hotel for a short night's rest, and start the process all over again the next day in a nearby town or city.

The commissioners were profoundly affected by what they saw and heard in the hearings. Only Glaze had an "insider's" perspective from within the system, and especially for the other commissioners, the hearings were a critical part of a learning process that grafted together understandings that are abstract and intellectual, emotional and from the heart. Murphy (Interview, 1995) articulated this learning process:

The hearings were particularly educative: they put a human face on a lot of the research...We heard or read about in the literature from a variety of sources, before we began, that teachers were called upon to play the role of social workers, counselling kids from dysfunctional families, orienting kids from immigrant families, presenting programs on drugs, on violence and Aids, [and providing] breakfasts...We heard all of that. When we talked with teachers from classrooms, some of whom made profoundly emotional presentations, then we knew we were on to something real. The hearings had a human component to it that had to be responded to.

Researchers, too, generally shared this perspective on the impact of the hearings on the learning process, and how the hearings gave RCOL credibility: "I thought I knew what the public wanted...I was trapped in the policy expert role...but the public did offer new information...The hearings were a critical part of the process...They gave credibility to RCOL...The Report would not have been acceptable without the hearings" (Researcher F, Interview, 1995). Another researcher thought the hearings were particularly educative for those commissioners who started the process with their own ready-made solutions to problems: "As the hearings got deeper, the commissioners got the sense of how intractable and difficult some of the problems were, and they let go of some of their pet solutions" (Researcher A, Interview, 1995).
Public Hearings: A Wide Net As A Critical Learning Device

RCOL's public hearings, including their structure, public profile, and internal impact bear comparison with the Berger Commission (Torgerson, 1986). This was by design: like Thomas Berger, the RCOL commissioners, with a shared commitment to social justice, wanted to spread their net as far as possible, to hear from the sophisticated and the more simple folk, the established insiders and anxious outsiders, the well-to-do and the marginalized. This strategy was developed with the active participation of Diana Crobie, the communications consultant, who in the early 1970s left the world of journalism to pursue a career in public and political communications. Her first major assignment as a consultant was to promote the communications strategy of the Berger Commission. In the context of RCOL, the voices of students and parents were brought into public focus, and the discourse about public education was enlarged to include more than established inside stakeholders that had populated a closely-linked policy community for decades.

Like the Berger Commission, the RCOL hearings promoted learning because the hearings had an impact on commissioners that was in equal parts intellectual or cognitive and emotional or affective (Murphy, Interview, 1995). Presentations spoken from the heart played as great, or greater, a role in the learning process of commissioners and researchers as the most finely-detailed argumentation of a major stakeholder. Writing about the Macdonald Commission, two scholars questioned whether the hearings would have contributed anything but a "vague sense in the commissioners' minds of the nature of the problem they are investigating" (Christie and Pross, 1990, p.12). The impact of RCOL hearings was anything but vague: in internal deliberations, commissioners would often cite chapter and verse of what they had heard in the hearings to justify or to counter a point of discussion and to direct researcher activity. For most commissioners the hearings served as their baptism by fire in the complex and contested domain of public education, as they travelled over most of Ontario to dozens of venues from September 1993 to mid-December 1993. Hearings and commissioner thinking had a closer, organic, connection for RCOL than for Macdonald.

Intertwined Streams

Another aspect of the hearings that deserves more attention here is the observation from the literature about hearings and research as separate streams of activity within a commission; within the RCOL
process these streams were more intertwined than separate. Christie and Pross (1990, p.12) note Cairns' finding (1990) that researcher activity within the Macdonald Commission was "carried out as a stream of activity separate from the hearings process." At the Macdonald Commission the research design was consolidated before the hearings process, and undertaken by academics who had little or no physical contact with the hearings, thus two separate streams (Simeon, 1987). Researchers at RCOL, on the other hand, were the scribes and the support staff at the hearings. The scribe role grew from the initiative of one researcher whose practice of recording the main points of hearings from both sides of the commissioners' table became a standard practice in which most of the researchers took turns. All researchers, without exception, attended several hearings and most contributed to the "Summary of Hearings" binder, several hundred pages thick, that was assembled over three months and distributed to all commissioners and researchers. The idea for further analysis of written briefs from the hearings was the initiative of another researcher, an activity that kept me occupied for several months; at regular intervals I would distribute copies of this analysis to commissioners and researchers. Within RCOL, then, the hearings and researcher activity were folded into one another.

The Hearings: Uncertainty and Ambiguity Revisited

In the sense that Feldman (1989) uses the term uncertainty, RCOL encountered uncertainty in another, striking fashion that was raised during the hearings process. While the hearings proved a rich resource of information and values, as well as being vital to the identification of issues, they also raised as many questions as answers. In this regard, Peters and Barker (1993) note the importance of information to the policy advice process:

A fundamental question about the characteristics of knowledge for policy advice is whether it actually exists. Further, if the information does exist, we need to know who possesses it and in what form it is available. Finally, if the information needed by government for its decision-making does not yet exist, that government needs to know if it could be created, given the current states of research and understanding. (p.2)

Many claims and counter-claims were made in the hearings about the state of public education, particularly about the level of academic standards and levels of student achievement. On the equity front, claims and counter-claims were made about whether the public education system was meeting acceptable standards in addressing problems stemming from student disabilities of all descriptions, about how
students from disadvantaged backgrounds and various minority communities were faring. In informal and formal internal discussions within RCOL on these issues, researchers were unable to offer anything but tentative, rudimentary information (usually in the form of Toronto-centred studies) to commissioners about some core issues because reliable system-wide information simply did not exist. The provincial assessments in Ontario, undertaken during RCOL's tenure, raised for the commissioners more questions about the validity and reliability of the instrument than they provided answers about current levels of achievement. The April 1993 Council of Ministers of Education, Canada/School Assessment Indicators Program (CMEC/SAIP), in mathematics content and problem-solving, and the April 1994 reading and writing assessments, both administered nationally to a sample of 13- and 16-year olds, confirmed suspicions that Ontario achievement levels were lagging compared to Alberta and British Columbia (CMEC, 1996). But this did not relieve the sense within RCOL that the lack of in-depth data constrained attempts to probe the state of public education, system-wide. As Bégin (Interview, 1995) noted in this regard:

Another big constraint was that people didn't know what was going on in the school systems. We had no systems-indicators to describe it in a meaningful way. People kept on saying: "How do we know how our schools are doing?" It's hard to describe the problem if you don't know what the problem is.

Regardless of how much emphasis one thinks should be put on some form of system-wide external assessment and evaluation, the lack of "hard data" in these areas posed a significant amount of uncertainty within RCOL to answer with any degree of authority the following question raised explicitly and implicitly in the hearings: How exactly are we doing as a system? The absence of information on this issue prompted the commissioners to support some initiatives in system-wide assessment.

Ambiguity, or the state of having many ways of thinking about the same information, is a paramount concept in understanding the work of RCOL. Because the debate in public education is embedded in the discourse of what public values should be emphasized in public schooling, and what the proper role of schooling in the socialization of children and youth should be, major questions posed before the Commission were inherently ambiguous. Thus the work of commissioners and researchers was defined by a high degree of interpreting various bits of information and making value judgments on them. Feldman (1989) notes a connection between ambiguity and interpretation:
Interpretation is the process of giving meaning. Since ambiguous issues have no clear meaning, they need to be interpreted. Policy issues need to have meaning before they can be acted upon...The meaning they acquire helps to determine what actions are appropriate. Lack of clear meaning often results from the fact that there are many possible ways of perceiving the issue; these may be thought of as competing interpretations. Interpretation also takes place when these competing perceptions are taken together to make sense of an issue. (p.7)

Thus, following the public hearings, a central task of commissioners and researchers was to interpret such core questions as: What are the primary and secondary purposes of education? What are the values that we wish the school system to impart? What knowledges and skills do we wish students to possess and why?

Cacophony and Dilemmas In The Public Hearings

The RCOL public hearings process invited undifferentiated participation from well-resourced interest groups like those from executives of teacher and trustee associations and big-city Chambers of Commerce, from more humble local groupings with tenuous, if any, links with provincial sympathizers, as well as from individuals such as parents who chose the hearings as a forum to educate the commissioners on how their system had failed their children. The choice of topic, as long as it addressed the broad areas of the mandate, was in the hands of the presenters whose oral and written submissions were a steady-stream amalgam of philosophy, diatribe, vision, special pleading, and emotive appeal that addressed every nook and cranny in each component of the publicly-funded education system. Looking at the format of the RCOL hearing process, all participants were on an equal footing, speaking for an allotted ten minutes, and in some cases for large associations, twenty minutes. Thus I witnessed one woman at the Scarborough hearings (November 1993) graphically lecture the increasingly nervous-looking commissioners for ten minutes about the importance of informing secondary school students about what sorts of sexual acts could be engaged in by students of different ages, including same-sex, without transgressing the law. At this same session the same ten minutes was assigned to the elected head of Ontario Supervisory Officers Association to explain what her fellow SOs did and why current downsizing had particularly hit this group hard. The hearings process was in this perspective inexorably democratic, if nothing else.

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The public hearings were important for issue identification and the examination of the solutions that various presenters preferred; presentations were important as reasoned arguments that relied on evidence, logic, and persuasion. The hearings were also a forum for the discussion of public values: arguments were grounded, implicitly or explicitly, in the articulation, affirmation, or contestation of values that have some basis in Canadian public discourse.

The following sample of issues from the Kitchener hearings (RCOL Hearings Summaries, November 4, 1993) addresses each level and component of the publicly-funded education system, and touches on each domain identified in the mandate, plus much more. These issues are fairly representative of what commissioners heard throughout Ontario. The following issues are less than half of those presented at the Kitchener hearings. Below, I insert the public values invoked explicitly and implicitly after each issue.

1) The negative impact of junior kindergarten on the education system invokes the primordial rights/responsibilities of parents in educating their children. 2) The need to restore a focus on the study of Canadian history underscores the role of schooling in socialization and citizenship goals, and the affirmation of traditional values. 3) The value of joint school-community projects refers to both the relevance and connectedness of schooling to the community. 4) The need to support newly-arrived immigrant children and their parents involves the notion of schooling as a lever in social justice and socialization. 5) The promotion of co-operative programs invokes the value of relevance and the image of schooling as contributing directly to the knowledge and skills of the market place. 6) Including developmentally-challenged students in regular school programs appeals to the value of social inclusion. 7) The promotion of environmental education involves the values of activist socialization and citizenship. 8) Being more sensitive to the needs of Native students appeals to social justice and equity concerns. 9) The necessity to combat racial/ethnic bias in schools and curricula is grounded in the conception of schooling as a social leveller and in activist socialization. 10) Returning teaching methodology to a more structured, teacher-focussed approach appeals both to a conception of schooling as primarily concerned with intellectual development in a traditional sense and with fostering academic quality. 11) The need for better teacher education and in-service support
underscores the professional learning needs of educators as critical to maintenance of a public good. 12) Getting rid of Grade 13 and shoring up curriculum standards is based on appeals to efficiency and excellence. 13) Ensuring the continuance of performing arts in holistic student development appeals to the notion of schooling having a wide set of goals, each of which are valid. 14) A condemnation of the Hall-Dennis, learner-centred philosophy, as well as a rejection of the "whole language" approach for language arts and the advocacy of a teacher-centred phonics and graduated-reader approach, are grounded in appeals to academic excellence in a traditional, transmission-model of teaching and learning, and to public accountability. 15) A rejection of a centralized education system in favour of a New Zealand local-autonomy approach invokes the value of community and local, parental accountability. 16) The desirability of national educational standards and assessment appeals to the role of a centralized government role in academic standard-setting and in promoting public accountability. 17) Letting teachers focus on academic goals and not assuming parental responsibilities invokes the image of schooling as centres of learning excellence and not as "therapeutic" instruments of the state. 18) The appeal for provincial-funding to non-Catholic religious schools invokes the values of public choice, the primordial rights of parents, an appeal to schooling as the transmitter of traditional and parental values, and social justice. 19) Respecting the autonomy of the Roman Catholic system invokes the respect for constitutionally-grounded rights and for diversity. 20) The appeal for an autonomous francophone system makes a similar reference to the Constitution Act as well as invoking the image of schooling as critical to survival of a beleaguered cultural minority. 21) Confederating all components of the school system under one public umbrella is based upon appeals to efficiency and to ensure the maintenance of a commonly-shared public good.

To sum up, the issues raised by the presenters in Kitchener and elsewhere were an amalgam of fact, values, and opinion; "bean counter" hard-headedness/tearful emotion; praise/condemnation of schools; schools should narrow/broaden their focus; the school as social leveller, or sorter(selector; we're doing our best under the circumstances/teachers are overpaid, under worked, and incompetent; value
relativism/absolutes; embrace/keep-at-bay corporate involvement in schools; modernist optimism/post-modern pessimism; certainty/uncertainty; restore the old, better ways/strive for post-industrial relevance; promote inclusivity/emphasize traditional, dominant values; serve the individual/community; restore the "common school" under one public umbrella/ensure religious choice for all communities; the needs of smaller, Northern, isolate and rural boards/the claims of "assessment-rich" big city boards; centralize/decentralize; mandate standardized testing/let teachers be the judge; delete these subjects/add these, and so forth.

"Cacophony" is how an editorialist in the Ottawa Citizen (November 17, 1993) described the voices in the first set of Ottawa hearings. Webster's College Dictionary (1991) defines cacophony as a "harsh discordance of sound; dissonance;" and "a discordant and meaningless mixture of sounds" (p. 190). The use of the word "cacophony" may be an oversimplification of what may be seen as a public reiteration of the dilemmatic nature of public education. The recognition of the dilemmatic condition made RCOL deliberation more than a choice between mutually-exclusive and dissonant values, and ideas, the choice of X over Y, or even the solving of a more complex but still "technical" problems. Rather, dilemmas as presented to RCOL could be perceived as fundamentally ideological and:

as social situations in which people are pushed and pulled in opposing directions...[T]hey...impose an assessment of conflicting values...In this way the characteristics of dilemmas are revealed as fundamentally born out of a culture which produces more than one possible ideal world, more than one hierarchical arrangement of power, value and interest. In this sense social beings are confronted by and deal with dilemmatic situations as a condition of their humanity. (Billig et al., 1988, p.163)

The commissioners were aware of the dilemmatic nature of hearings presentations early in the process. The general orientation of the commissioners to view the issues of public education as fundamentally dilemmatic can be seen in their stance of rejecting out-of-hand the ideas of those perceived to be "simple solution" advocates during the hearings (Caplan; Murphy, Interviews, 1995). Ultimately, the hearings served the purpose of educating the commissioners about the dilemmatic nature of public education while pushing them to consider the larger question of what purposes public school should serve, and how the often contradictory demands on public schooling could be resolved. The resolution of dilemmatic aspects of public education was the implicit theme of the "balance" that was featured prominently in the Report.

The hearings process was instrumental in educating the commissioners about an unrelenting and
central topic that bedevils public education: traditional or transmission-oriented schooling versus progressive education. In the hearings many presenters perceived these two conceptions as mutually-exclusive opposites in which one position was seen as the salvation of education while the other was demonized.

Billig et al. (1988) say that rather than being mutually-exclusive opposites extracted from separate dialogues, the transmission and progressive understandings of the teaching and learning process are related and share common denominators. Both views are "defined point by point in contradiction to another position which must inevitably, therefore, belong to the same universe of discourse...[Nor] are the values of each position...mutually exclusive," particularly on such issues as engaging students in the educational process, the need to adhere to some definable curriculum and standards, the necessity to restrict absolute individual freedom, and the need for social constraints in all aspects of personal conduct (p.45).

Billig et al. (1988, p. 28) contrast the differences between a lived ideology ("the social patterning of everyday thinking") and intellectual ideology ("not...the everyday thinking of a particular group, but...a formalized philosophy"). This understanding is important to understand the values and ideas that flowed within RCOL, and indeed to understanding the role of ideology in public education. For example, many of the presentations in the hearings, particularly from individual teachers, may be classified as "lived ideology" by which this group would explain the contradictory pulls that they experience in their work. These teachers frequently demonstrated how they tried to deal simultaneously with demands for academic achievement and demands related to the general care of children and youth beset by a host of "out-of-school" related variables. Another example of lived ideology is how teachers explained the teaching and learning process, and how this defied a straight-forward categorization of either the "traditional or transmission-oriented" approach or the "progressive" approach. To a large extent, then, the lived ideology of teachers is defined by the contradictions of everyday life, with getting the job done in whatever ways are necessary to do it. For teachers, a lived ideology means living with dilemmas. On the other hand, hearings presenters from academe and executives from teacher federations, and the input of experts and researchers, more readily conform to a description of "intellectual ideologues," who advocated approaches to a number of issues in a way consistent with a formalized, philosophical approach to education.
Caught in the middle between lived and intellectual ideologies were the co-chairs. Not steeped in expertise regarding Kindergarten to OAC issues at the beginning of the process, the co-chairs had to draw on notions of both lived and intellectual ideologies in order to come to an understanding of the issues. Other than a general progressive orientation, they had no ready-made ideational template by which they could lead internal discussions and help slot problems into solution categories that were consistent with some greater ideological pattern.

Dealing with the traditional/progressive dilemma in education pushed the commissioners to reject the notion of mutually-exclusive choices, and to emphasize how both conceptions should support each other in a "progressive conservative" fashion, as Caplan noted:

All of us had some conservative aspects: Glaze was a bit elitist, maybe Bharti also...I was influenced by the way my kid was treated in school, and I put the stress on literacy and on basics, and I supported a concept of accountability that is more sophisticated than Cooke's four tests. But I also supported the [notion] that schools should be...a jumble of noise and activity...that would drive the Quality Education people crazy...This is the progressive part, and the best teachers should do it this way...Kids must be treated with respect and stimulated, and everything I wrote in the Short Version attested to this, and my colleagues never objected. (Caplan, Interview, 1995)

Stakeholder Voices, Bias, and Zeitgeist

Above I addressed the progressive bias that united commissioner thinking on some important issues. A fault line of insider/outsider bias that divided the ranks of commissioners and researchers also snaked through commissioner and researcher perceptions of stakeholders' presentations. This process of categorization partially explained the degree of commissioner sympathy, or the lack of it, to presenters, experts, and what they had to say.

The organized coterie of "insider stakeholders" that made presentations in the hearings such as representatives from teacher federations, trustee associations, supervisory officer associations, faculties of education, and MET were often described by commissioners in interviews as "defensive" and "turf protecting." Insider stakeholder presentations were not generally viewed as sympathetically as those from "outsiders" (except by Glaze). Outsiders included individual parents, students, special education advocates, representatives of multicultural organizations, and individual teachers. An exception to the bias against insiders was the representations from the Roman Catholic and francophone groups, which
were highly focussed, omnipresent, and highly repetitive. Given their constitutionally-entrenched positions, and the presence of a co-chair and a commissioner who kept a tight leash on their portfolios, commissioners and researchers conceded that Roman Catholic and francophone demands were generally accepted as a "done deal from day one" (Researcher G, Interview, 1995).

Glaze (Interview, 1995) spoke bluntly on the "image problem" of inside stakeholders as perceived by the other commissioners: "[Within the Commission] there was mistrust of [insiders], a sense of you [insiders] are only looking out for your own self-interest..." Despite this co-chair bias against insiders, commissioners were careful not to show this bias overtly in hearings towards insider presentations (except for Caplan, on occasion) and there was "very little finger pointing" at the perceived culpable parties in the Report (Researcher G, Interview, 1995). This stance of commissioner "objectivity" reflected a collective decision not to antagonize any stakeholders, inside or outside. On the other hand, the "Voices" excerpts, vignettes scattered throughout the Report, that quoted directly from presenters' briefs, had an ample array of insider targets to critique, often without mercy.

Researcher A (Interview, 1995), who attended many of the public hearings, saw a definite pattern of winners and losers in the hearings, some "in sync" with the times while others were not. "Out of sync" insiders were: the trustees and the supervisory officers ("good presence but (1993/94) was not their time"); teacher associations ("factored themselves out...by their intransigence"); faculties of educations ("not major players"); and subject specialists ("considerable nostalgia over a kingdom lost"). "In sync" outsiders included: "the voices of parents, ratepayers, students, and the general public...it was their era to be heard, that's why the strands of excellence, accountability, and equity come out in the Report." The voice of the business community and the "whole economic subtext" also had some impact, as Researcher A noted:

We were moving into a nasty economic time, with winners and losers in a pear-shaped economy, and global competition. This moved RCOL in the direction of considering the role of schools in preparing students for the job market and the issue of employable skills, and away from the liberal arts notion of what's good for the formation of students.

This economic subtext also pushed RCOL to consider "hard-edged" assessment mechanisms to measure educational outcomes in globally-competitive terms:

Parents also said this, it was not just the "business agenda." Caplan was publicly hostile to this view, and outraged by some of the language they used, but there is a need to
recognize that the system is expensive and there should be verifiable outcomes; thus a new emphasis on the "useful."

Researcher A also contended that the economic subtext pulled RCOL in the direction of a "triage" philosophy, "of who needs surgery first? If we want more of a business-skills approach, we need computers and literacy and those social formation things that support these values. Other subjects get shoved aside."

Researcher A's comments on the relationship of time to the acceptability of ideas or proposals from various groups being in or out of synchronization with the times are helpful. These comments suggest how the insider/outsider bias of the co-chairs was to some extent reflective of the zeitgeist, "the spirit of the time" or "the general trend of thought or feeling characteristic of a particular period of time" (Webster's, 1991, p. 1551). A reading of the zeitgeist is difficult to nail down. Sensitivity to the "thought" or "feeling" of a time period and how one interprets a combination of concrete and abstract information, signs and symbols, and evolving public opinions and moods, are ultimately subjective. This concept is allied to the notion of contextual factors, but by being tied to a more subtle understanding of mood, thought, and feeling, is closer to what Pal (1992) has dubbed the "black arts" of policy-making, the ability to divine meaning from a number of visible and hidden stimuli that may leave other policy actors confounded. Reading the zeitgeist is also a highly-cherished political skill honed by democrat and dictator alike. That being said, a reading of the times is incumbent upon policy-related commissions, particularly being sensitive to the particular values of a specific era.

Quoting Ricker (1981), Gidney (1996, p. 41) notes in regard to the reading of the times

the Hall-Dennis Committee could no more have written a back-to-the basics report in the mid-1960s than the royal commissions [of the 1950s] in the western provinces could have prepared progressive tracts at the height of the Cold War.

[Gidney adds]: And no matter how much they might strain at the leash, Bégin-Caplan could no more write an unqualified paean to progressivism than Hall-Dennis could write one that fitted the mood of the late 1980s or 1990s.

Strain at the leash they did, if the value-laden debates featured in Chapter 6 are used as examples, but RCOL commissioners also took pains to distance themselves from Hall-Dennis as a symbol of progressive education that still sent shockwaves throughout Ontario public education. Glaze (Interview, 1995)
emphasized the need to ameliorate the deficiencies that many presenters, rightly or wrongly, attributed to the influence of Hall-Dennis, and that rebalancing the pulls of equity and excellence and of formal authority and democratic participation was in order:

The whole issue of standards, rigour, and excellence were very important. The commissioners realized that Hall-Dennis was being blamed for the ills of the system, as if the pendulum had swung too far in one direction. People wanted a rebalance, a refocus of system: issues of high standards, excellence, student performance and achievement were critical... On the issues of parental participation and the role of the community, we felt the system had to be democratized, and that the best way to do it was to allow for parental involvement. We all supported issues around teacher education, preparing teachers to work successfully in the system.

Although the value-laden debates show that some core tenets of progressive education were never abandoned by some commissioners, there was a collective understanding that the movement towards public accountability as the "new" value of the 1990s could not be obviated, even if it was perceived as "hollow," to quote Caplan. In particular, commissioners were pushed by not only the "business agenda" but also the "student and parent agenda" to recommend changes in the education system that Lloyd Dennis had explicitly declared out-moded a generation ago: a greater uniformity of curriculum and standards, and some form of centralized student assessment mechanisms, to ensure that all students were assessed fairly and that schools and teachers could employ these instruments to improve teaching and learning.

The *zeitgeist* also had a curricular dimension: despite the sympathy of the commissioners for the liberal arts approach in education, the times nudged the commissioners to ponder new emphases on the curriculum that were based not on the values of tradition but on the value of relevance, particularly the role of information technology on learning and the career-oriented aspects of secondary school education. With the *zeitgeist* came a "technological liberal" appreciation of the connectedness of the knowledge and skills of schooling with the needs of the economy and the impact of technological change. With the *zeitgeist* also came the cry for greater accountability at all levels of the educational system. The *zeitgeist* also shaped a sense that commissioners' choices were constrained by a larger "triage philosophy", that the age of unimpeded growth in the public education sector was over and would not soon return.

Public hearings were a vital source of information, and a wellspring of ambiguity, about issues in public education. I turn now to the discussion of another important learning experience for RCOLers,
their numerous school visits.

SCHOOL VISITS

The commissioners visited 33 elementary and secondary schools during the fall of 1993 and the first couple of months in 1994 (public, separate, francophone and anglophone, private, alternative, and native on/off reserve), and engaged in dialogue with students, teachers, and administrators. The location of the schools dotted the entire province: Toronto, Ottawa, Nepean, Guelph, Cornwall, Lakefield, Scarborough, Moose Factory, Moosonee, Sioux Lookout, Powassan, Oakville, Orleans, Smiths Falls, North Bay, Calibogie, and Walpole Island.

Certain schools would crop up again and again in commissioner discussions during this period (Observation notes, September 1993 to February, 1994). The first of these involved Caplan's visit to Smiths Falls District Collegiate Institute. There he engaged the student body in an open forum and was amazed to find out that, according to the students, this was the first time anyone had openly solicited their opinions about their school in a collective fashion. Students in hearings often made similar claims. The origin of the recommendations in the Report (RCOL Report, Vol. 4, Chapter 17) that support students' claims for greater involvement in the affairs of their schools can be traced back to this key incident. Such claims were strongly supported by the advocacy of Bharti, who was a keen believer in building a more inclusive community within schools, and by Glaze who was a consistent supporter of parent and student inclusion in school decision-making (Bharti; Glaze; Interviews, 1995).

Three "high-tech" visits had a lasting impact on the commissioners: River Oaks Public School in Oakville; Mary Ward, a separate school in Toronto; and a board-wide information technology project at the Lambton County Roman Catholic Separate School Board in Sarnia. In their visits to these sites, the commissioners were "blown away", in Caplan's words, by the energy and excitement generated by an information-technology oriented, highly-structured curriculum that interactively hooked up students with students, and schools with schools, on a global scale (RCOL Report, Vol.4, p.8-9). To the commissioners, these schools were one of the ideal prototypes of the school of the future, leading the commissioners to elevate the concept of information technology to the status of one of the four engines that they argued would, in synergistic fashion, transform schooling. Bégin (Interview, 1995) contended that information technology will eventually transform the nature of teaching and learning, a process she
claimed has remained "more or less the same since Gutenberg" fashioned the first printing press and print literacy no longer was the vested privilege of the few. "...Walls will be knocked down, rigid structures will disappear", and teaching will re-emerge as a totally "facilitative" and supportive role.

Another ideal school that impressed Caplan, and that got discussed within commissioner ranks, was Canterbury High School in Ottawa, a public school for the performing arts. Caplan (Interview, 1995) reflected: "When I read about great schools, I got this sense of noise and jumble of activity that would drive the Quality Education people crazy. [A school like] Canterbury is Paul Bennett's worst nightmare." [Bennett, a teacher at Upper Canada College and school trustee for York Region, is prominent in the reform-oriented Quality Education Network in the Greater Toronto Area, and in the media, a frequently-cited critic of public education standards]. For Caplan, (Interview, 1995) the ability of teachers to animate their students in the spirit of River Oaks and Canterbury was much more important than the issues of curriculum and assessment, two RCOL topics he said did not inspire him.

School Visits As a Learning Tool

School visits for the commissioners were more than just symbolic, political excursions, or exercises in showing the flag, generating publicity, and reassuring a sceptical public. As described in Chapter 2, Deal (1995) maintained that commissions are a form of modern myth-making, with rituals that symbolically reflect:

our faith in expertise and rational problem-solving...[T]he value of summits or commissions often rests more on the sensibleness of their recommendations. Such policy statements, grounded in the latest research, are expected to be implemented at the local level so that the problems can be rectified (pp. 121-122).

What Deal is saying, in other words, is not just that the external activities of a commission are primarily ritualistic, expressive, and symbolic, but that the substance and validity of a commission's recommendations are drawn from the well of grounded literature and policy analysis. What Deal may be missing with the characterization of the external activity by education commissions as primarily ceremonial is that while certain, very public activities of a commission may serve to send messages from a commission to targeted parties in a political-symbolic sense, these activities may also serve to promote substantive commissioner learning. The problem with Deal's conception is that it posits a one-way relationship from a commission to its task environment, and does not question what the impact of that
environment is on a commission. It is useful to recall Cairns' caveat (1990) at this juncture:

The commissioners [of the Macdonald Commission] were the focal point for two major streams of potential influence, the hearings process and the research analyses. The influence of the former is often slighted by critics who view it as essentially a legitimizing requirement or as a consciousness-raising exercise to generate a supportive climate for the pending report...The hearings process gave commissioners a sense of confidence and a feeling for the vastness and diversity of the country that not all commissioners had previously experienced (p. 105).

In the context of RCOL, this dichotomy of external and internal activity of a commission posed by Deal does not jive with these findings: while hearings and school visits obviously had a symbolic, and ritualist component, they also served as powerful learning mechanisms of significance to the commissioners. School visits went beyond symbolism for the basic reasons presented above in the discussion of public hearings: they partially satisfied the non-expert commissioners' urgent need to construct a knowledge base, both abstract and concrete, encompassing the big picture but sensitive to local detail. Student representations were strong in the hearings but often one-sided; school visits added a concreteness to the inquiry process, a perspective on how the pieces fitted together locally, that was irreplaceable. Globe columnist Michael Valpy's much-cited article on the "40 percent factor," or the percentage of students who come to school with some disadvantage, disability, or problem that impedes learning, was written after Valpy trailed Caplan through a number of school visits. In the end, the recommendation about respecting the views of students within schools and school boards, and the conceptualization of the engine of information technology, owe a large measure of their genesis to school visits. Although the adult commissioners played less a direct role than Bharti in the youth outreach strategy, this activity also played a role, albeit of a lesser degree, in the development of commissioner thinking.

THE MEDIA

The commissioners undertook a vigorous campaign to inform the media, with hundreds of interviews with newspaper, radio, and television reporters. Media coverage about RCOL was at a peak during the hearings phase. Several of the public hearings were taped by local cable TV stations and rebroadcast during the winter of 1993-94. In December 1993, TVOntario and La Chaîne Française aired a week-long "Education Summit" featuring the commissioners, invited guests, and in-callers. The Baton
Broadcasting System in January 1994 arranged a one-hour call-in show that reached an estimated 100,000 viewers. The commissioners found the francophone media sessions particularly informative, as the issues brought forth went well beyond the scope of the largely single-issue governance-oriented presentations of organized francophone groups in the hearings (Researcher B, Interview, 1995).

Two influential newspapers, the Toronto Globe and Mail (represented by Jennifer Lewington), and the Star (Andrew Duffy was its reporter, and a frequent attender of public hearings), consistently provided front-section coverage during the hearings, and in the aftermath of the release of the Report. Diana Crosbie, the communications consultant, and her assistant provided information packages to local journalists during the hearings phase, and arranged interviews for commissioners with local media representatives. A news-clipping service provided weekly articles on how RCOL was being perceived all over the province, in print and radio. Commissioners, each of whom received a copy of the clippings, and researchers who collectively got one circulated copy, poured over these clippings regularly and discussed them, and were pleased with the wide, frequent, and generally positive coverage. RCOLers were also great devourers of media coverage in local paper coverage of the hearings process, read and discussed in hotel rooms and in vans as we sped away to another Ontario city or village. Because of the lack of RCOL's public visibility for much of 1994 during internal deliberations and the writing process, media attention was much less frequent then, and would not be reactivated until the leak of core RCOL recommendations to the media in mid-December 1994, one month before the Report's official release. I pick up the topic of media again in the discussion on RCOL as a political instrument in Chapter 7.

OUTREACH

Compared with the almost cloistered atmosphere that surrounded Hall-Dennis's three-year mulling over of only 150 briefs and scant public input, RCOL can be viewed as going out of its way to solicit views from individuals and groups that would not normally find their way into an intimidating public forum, as the lists of sites, events, individuals and groups cited in the Report's Appendices attest (Bedard and Townsend, 1995, p.15). In addition to the hearings and contacts with the media, there were several mechanisms to initiate and sustain a two-way dialogue about public education with all kinds of individuals and groups. RCOL received over 1500 briefs that were mailed in and a 1-800 number received about 350 oral submissions. Some 1500 messages were posted to the RCOL computer conference on
TVOnline/ChaîNET, TVOntario's/La Chaîne's prototype bulletin board. One enterprising and highly-energetic educator regularly inundated RCOL's fax machine with opinion pieces, generally in praise of the public education system, over the course of the Commission's life cycle. Researchers were sometimes assigned or volunteered to field some of these missives, but giving them a fair reading would have required more analysts on board than RCOL had, even with a full complement, and a more generous time frame. Ms. Hoskins, the receptionist, was often tasked with fielding recorded phone and fax traffic.

Two bilingual editions of Spotlight On Learning, with a print run of 50,000 copies, were distributed over the province, and addressed RCOL activities and major issues that cropped up in the hearings. Spotlight was largely written by researchers, with editorial input from commissioners, and was a labour that sparked much internal hand-wringing. Researchers resented getting "dragged into" its production because they wanted to pay closer attention to their own pressing time frames and agendas (Observation notes, Jan.7, 1994). The commissioners, early in 1994, visited a number of immigrant groups to inquire about their educational needs (such as Welcome House in Toronto), and talked with parents and educators at schools in several settings. They also tele-conferenced with people in Timmins and video-conferenced with francophone ethno-cultural communities in Toronto and Ottawa, and personally engaged in dialogue with youth, over several months, in RCOL kiosks installed in several shopping malls across the province (RCOL Report, Vol.1, p.12).

Most active as participants in the "youth outreach strategy" were Hicks, the youth strategy specialist, and Bharti, the young commissioner, and their team of volunteers, with occasional input from other commissioners. They paid visits to 36 community centres, detention centres, jails, homes for pregnant teens, multi-service agencies, and cultural organizations (RCOL Report, Vol.1, p.13). It is difficult to assess the impact of these visits, other than noting the positive coverage in the media and the value the visited youth put on being consulted. In terms of identifying the educational concerns of youth, RCOL issued a press release (June 15, 1994) citing "respect, poverty, and course relevance" as the key issues that emerged from these visits, but these had largely already been identified in the hearings, through generous input from students and their organizations. For the researchers, this part of the public consultation process was detached from their own agendas and they routinely begged off entreaties to become involved, citing mounting workloads (Observation notes, Jan. 13, 1994).
CONCLUDING REMARKS

In Chapter 4, I have addressed one internal phase of Commission activity, the orientation phase and several external activities related to public consultation, including public hearings, school visits, media relations, and outreach. In Chapter 5, I proceed to the discussion of internal activities that absorbed Commission energies for all of 1994: internal deliberations and the writing process.
CHAPTER 5 - INTERNAL DELIBERATIONS AND THE WRITING PROCESS

The main task before RCOLers in 1994 was to find some agreement about what should be said in the Report and to write it. In this chapter I examine and analyze the two core activities that were the means to this end, internal deliberations and the writing process.

INTERNAL DELIBERATIONS

Internal deliberations were the post-hearings discussions from January 1994 until December 1994. Deliberations by May 1994 overlapped the many tasks related to producing a written report, and talk within RCOL by that time had gravitated away from pondering generalities, towards the more structured goal of deciding what to commit to in the Report, who would write it, and how it would be written.

The three types of formally-organized internal deliberations were expert meetings, researcher meetings, and commissioner meetings, and each served a different purpose. Throughout 1994 researcher and commissioner meetings were the main liaison devices by which RCOLers attempted to coordinate their thoughts and activities through a process of mutual adjustment. A substantial amount of mutual adjustment took place outside the confines of these formalized settings, as commissioners and researchers exchanged directions, views, and rebuttals orally, by mailboxes, in offices, and by phone, and in written form by voluminous E-mail traffic.

Expert meetings

Expert meetings were held at the request of commissioners or at the suggestion of researchers. In most cases, RCOLers would receive experts at 101 Bloor Street West; occasionally, one or more RCOLers would do the travelling. Over 300 such individuals and groups met directly with commissioners and/or researchers. (For a complete list of those designated as experts, see Appendix C, RCOL Report, Vol.4, p. 220-222.) The broadly-defined category of experts included those in: Roman Catholic, francophone, and Native circles; academe; different levels and agencies of the provincial and federal governments; out-of-province jurisdictions such as British Columbia; out-of-country jurisdictions such as New York State, Kentucky, and the United Kingdom; consulting firms; former members of commissions and committees on education and so forth.
A perusal of the RCOL calendar from January to March 1994 shows this period to be the highest level of scheduled expert consultation (RCOL Calendar, Jan. 12, 1994). During that period various combinations of commissioners and researchers met with the following individuals and representatives from groups either at 101 Bloor Street West or at other sites throughout the province: (January) Jerry Paquette, a professor of education from the University of Western Ontario and the author of a commissioned paper; the Commission on Systemic Racism in the Justice System; dinner with the Minister, Dave Cooke; a half-dozen meetings with two pro bono consultants from McKinsey Consultants on governance issues; Teacher Education Symposium; MET officials and delegates from Czechoslovakia; Council of Directors of Education; Ontario Welcome House; (February) Jane Armstrong from Environics; Veronica Lacey, Director of the North York Board of Education; Coalition for Education Reform; Council for Franco-Ontarian Education; Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues; Ontario Secondary School Principals' Council; Premier's Economic Council-Task Force on Lifelong Learning; Supervisory Officers of Metro Toronto Separate School Board; (March) Premier's Council on Children and Youth; Joanne Zwine, a superintendent with the Halton Board of Education and Michael Fullan, Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Toronto; and the Ontario Council on University Affairs.

During this three-month period, commissioners were scheduled to be at RCOL headquarters a total of thirty-three working days, and between expert meetings would attend to other matters including administrivia, strategy, and internal deliberations. Several visits to schools, two hearings in Ottawa and Timmins, and several media events were also planned during this period. Glaze missed a few of these commissioner meetings, as she was also committed to nearly a full work-load at the North York Board. For researchers and support staff, on the other hand, work at RCOL headquarters was characterized by much less weaving in and out, and was much more a five-days-a-week "regular" job (at the minimum). For commissioners, the heavy load of various types of expert meetings and other events during this period meant that few solid blocks of time were left over to tackle substantive issues about what direction they wished to take in the writing of the Report.

Some expert meetings were gatherings of kindred spirits, such as when the commissioners met with the Premier's Council on Health, Children and Youth Advisory where Bégin had played an active role, and Zeigler, the researcher, served as a volunteer staffer; (of two experts from this Council, Caplan
(Interview, 1995) said: "Some [experts] were great, like [Dan] Orford and [Paul] Steinhauer"); or when Caplan met fellow equity advocates or ethno-community representatives; or when Murphy renewed a long-standing acquaintance with someone in the Catholic education community or with community alliance advocates; or when Bégin, who is not Franco-Ontarian, met with francophone groups; or when Glaze invited a group of principals, who shared her progressive, student-centred educational ideology, to dialogue with her fellow commissioners; or when Bharti met with fellow student activists (Researchers B and F, Interviews, 1995).

In some cases, the commissioners displayed scepticism about the advice they were receiving, perhaps a spill-over from the public hearings. One O.I.S.E. academic, Andy Hargreaves, who advocated teacher autonomy from "bureaucratically-imposed" notions of purpose and accountability, was lectured by Bégin that his perspective was "naive", given the context of the times and greater calls for external accountability (Observation notes, May 12, 1994). Caplan's less-than-enthusiastic response to some discussions, such as the McKinsey presentations, was signalled by fidgeting and a slumped posture, sometimes to be followed by leaving the conference room for extended periods (Observation notes, 1994; Caplan, Interview, 1995).

Not listed among the experts in the Report, but certainly playing a large role in advice-giving, was an informal network of individuals that commissioners and researchers sought out regularly to test out ideas. Although I only have anecdotal evidence on this point, I do know that such individuals were consulted. They remained largely anonymous, referred to as "friends" or "acquaintances", but their views were bantered about in conversations by commissioner and researcher alike. For example, I was told that one networker, upon hearing that RCOL was considering a recommendation for the College of Teachers, pronounced it as "a stupid idea that was bound to stir up a hornet's nest" (Observation notes, June 30, 1994). The circle of experts was not as wide as some commissioners would have wished; Researcher G (Interview, 1995) contended that Caplan on several occasions would have welcomed more input from James Turk, the Director of Education of the Ontario Federation of Labour, but Turk declined, limiting his influence to one formal presentation. Researcher G speculated that the "Social Contract" had soured the OFL's perspective on any initiatives perceived as related to the Rae Government.
Researcher Meetings: Administrivia and Micropolitics

Researcher meetings, aside from discussion of administrivia and the less frequent attention to substantive issues (the latter also eventually squeezed out by the rush of events), were primarily exercises in micropolitics and catharsis, in which the researchers aired their complaints about the meandering process and about their difficulties in interacting with commissioners. This collective sense of grievance was the nearest approximation of a researcher "team" identity that RCOL could offer (explored more fully in the section on organizational structure in Chapter 8), pointing to the formation of two camps within RCOL whose interests were perceived as diverging: "we," the researchers, versus "them," the commissioners. Attempting to mediate between the two groups was the executive director who would hear the complaints and offer strategies about what to do. Most often, her advice was to "not rock the boat": she feared that any open confrontation between the groups would create such conflict as to cause an organizational implosion. Bridging the cognitive/substantive gap between commissioners and researchers would also prove difficult, as the executive director did not come from an educator background and some of the subject areas that were problematic were outside of her recently-acquired MET-based expertise. In addition, given the lack of a research director, the executive director could not assume the role of directing research and writing efforts, as she did not have sufficient professional expertise. Researchers, aside from some micopolitical considerations, were thus left to fend for themselves, primarily as individuals and occasionally as ad hoc groupings of two or more. I explore the topic of researcher and executive director micropolitics in the discussion on organizational structure in Chapter 8.

Post-hearings Commissioner Meetings

In this section the major focus is on the third type of meeting, post-hearings commissioner meetings, that were held on pre-planned days throughout 1994. During the first couple of months in 1994, a full complement of researchers would often attend these meetings. The usual procedure for discussion was the "tour de table" (Bégin's phrase) by which each commissioner would speak in turn on a specific issue, and researchers would jump in when prompted by a commissioner or if they felt they had something to add. The voice of the executive director in these meetings was heard more often as the discussion process evolved. By May 1994, researcher attendance dropped off, partly in response to work
loads, partly because the meetings were perceived as exercises in "dithering", and partly because certain commissioners felt uncomfortable about airing their disagreements before a full house (Observation notes, April 18, 1994).

A glance at the 1994 summer schedule for commissioner meetings tells us that a full quorum of commissioners was difficult to obtain because of other commitments and holidays (RCOL schedule, June 27, 1994). Glaze was a working superintendent juggling two enervating roles, Bharti had obligations as a student (including final exams), and Bégin had professional commitments that took her overseas. As this was the period when much of the writing was in an unfinished state, commissioners were forced to catch up when they returned to the fold, and important issues had to be reopened for discussion (Researcher F, Interview, 1995). In June, 11 commissioner meetings were held, with Bharti missing four. In July, 9 meetings were scheduled, with Glaze missing three and Bégin one. August had 13 commissioner meetings, with both Glaze and Bégin missing two. Come September, Bharti was off to Harvard, and except for occasional visits when her schedule allowed, was effectively out of the picture, E-mail notwithstanding.

When commissioners were not at 101 Bloor, the slack in communications was substantially tightened with the E-mailing of draft chapters and comments to and from Toronto, Ottawa, Cornwall, and North Bay. One researcher, who filed all his E-mails during a year-and-a-half sojourn at RCOL, estimated he amassed over 8,000 messages (Observation notes, December 21, 1994). Commissioners and researchers used computers to network with one another, to discuss agendas, to compose their own contributions to the Report, and to comment upon and edit each other's work. RCOL was wired into MET's computer network, and RCOLers could peruse the missives emanating from the offices of the Minister, Dave Cooke, and his Deputy Minister, Charles Pascal.

Researchers and commissioners were dissatisfied with the internal deliberation process, and attributed much of blame for its protracted, unwieldy nature to a number of factors discussed below. The first casualty of this untidy process was the elaborate planning board, affixed to a wall in the main conference room, that Di Cecco, assisted by her daughter, had designed over a weekend early in the process. Graphically illustrating the proposed schedule of discussion and writing for 1994, it was quickly made irrelevant by a process that eluded all time lines but one, the deadline to deliver the Report to the Minister by the end of the year.
Commissioner Meetings: Inductive Logic, Divergent Thinking, And Epiphany

Within RCOL, if devising a proper mechanism for the discussion of ideas was beyond grasp, the discussion of ideas in general was problematic, because of a number of factors attributed by RCOLers: divergent thinking, the lack of a common image about the learner, an inductive learning process, differing philosophical perspectives, inclusion of everyone's preferences, the arbitrary nature of the debate, the outsider (non-expert) knowledge base of most commissioners, the absences of commissioners, and the difficulty of promoting a more coherent approach to discussion because of co-chair stances. The relative consensus among RCOLers that these were indeed important factors would suggest that there is some substance to these perceptions. Below I deal with these observations in some cases one-by-one, and deal with others together when they are related.

Researcher A (Interview, 1995) tied the lack of a conceptual framework for internal discussion with the failure to achieve consensus on an image of the learner around which the ideas could be ordered. Instead, the researcher asserted, commissioner consensus was largely a product of including divergent viewpoints that were accommodated in a political fashion:

RCOL never developed an organizational mechanism to allow for the systematic development of ideas. No attempt was made to establish a conceptual framework that could propel the discussion process. RCOL never addressed a number of important issues because the commissioners never got the image of what the learner in education should be. We did have a good consensual document in the sense that the five commissioners contributed, but the commissioners never reached an intellectual understanding of the school, the system...There's "apparent" consensus [because] it was a politically-driven document: all commissioners got what they wanted.

Researcher F (Interview, 1995) described the "tour de table" sessions, led by co-chairs, as an exercise in "sequential monologues" that prompted researcher frustration and resistance, and claimed that multiple and concurrent strategies to get a handle on the discussion of ideas proved ineffective during the first several months of 1994:

Everybody spoke in turn, in sequential monologues, more than engaging in general discussion. Rather than responding to one point, commissioners would often raise another issue, and the discussion would often go round in circles. There was a lack of direction to the process, with ten different strategies all at once; a shotgun approach, with no clear sense of what the task was. I thought our job was to help commissioners identify issues and find relevant literature and then discuss it, and then go to recommendations. Nothing really worked: the abortive McKinsey exercise [in organization design] could have
provided a conceptual framework but it didn't make sense to the commissioners. By March 1994, the research team thought that too much time had been wasted: we knew we had to force some action.

Probably the most potent reason why no "image of the learner" was used as a prism to organize internal debates, and the content of the Report, is that the general logic of the RCOL learning process was inductive, not deductive. In a deductive learning process the critical first element is the identification of general principles, goals, or a vision from which are crafted a logically-sequenced set of ideas, objectives, and argumentations. In an inductive learning process, the meaning of the subject matter must first go through a process of interpretation of fact, values, and opinions; from the process of interpretation, and the normative stances assumed during the process, the principles and goals emerge as well as the nuts and bolts of policy recommendations. In Chapter 2 I noted that "the [Macdonald] Commission's own philosophy, or basic policy direction, only emerged after virtually all of the research had been commissioned" (Cairns, 1990, p.99). In the mode of the Macdonald Commission and the Pepin-Robarts Task Force, not only did RCOL's "big picture" emerge towards the end of the process, but these pictures were assembled, through the activity of writing, which weaved through the discussion process. More accurately perhaps, the "big picture" emerged in RCOL after the writing of the main Report was completed. In this regard, Caplan (Interview, 1995), for example, maintained that he began to see certain relationships of what had been written as he was busy penning a large chunk of the "Short Version" of the Report, a synthesizing exercise that followed on the heels of the completion of most of the larger tome.

The inductive learning process was also stimulated by divergent thinking aimed at innovation, in which the creativity of commissioners and researchers, rather than shop-worn solutions, was valued. What divergent thinking seeks to fulfill is a creative challenge, to propose new ways of tackling problems; divergent thinking welcomes the unknown and the puzzling. On the other hand, convergent thinking aims to perfect the status quo by using what knowledge is available to the experts of the day (Mintzberg, 1979, p.436). The knowledge search in this divergent-thinking scenario shot off in a number of different directions at once. The pull to the novel was underscored by the co-chairs' desire to present a new and radical vision for public education, and their distrust of status-quo, inside stakeholder conceptions of what the problems were and where the solutions lay. The four engines, the commissioners' main contribution
to the Report's organization, are probably the best concrete examples of divergent thinking that drew on hearing presentations, readings, views of researchers, and large doses of discretion. The conceptualization and articulation of the four engines were consequently both time consuming and convoluted.

Another factor contributing to the pull to divergent thinking is attributable to the various professional backgrounds of the commissioners. In the context of the Macdonald Commission, Cairns notes (1990) that the divergent backgrounds of twelve commissioners posed a particular challenge for the chair, "not because the commissioners were a particularly fractious group, but because their varied backgrounds gave them differing perspectives on their collective task" (p. 90). The five RCOL commissioners' backgrounds also promoted divergent thinking, as Murphy (Interview, 1995) explained:

We all came from mutually different conceptual frameworks. There were people on the commission with a mindset of a philosophical discourse in terms of traditional philosophy. There was also a mindset of a Marxist analysis, and those who were absolute pragmatists. We didn't work from a clearly defined set of philosophical principles. If you put that mix together it becomes difficult to come to an agreement...We wrote [the Report], then we went back and pulled the vision out of it.

The logical inference here is that, if RCOLers could not agree on a set of guiding principles to structure their work, the discussion and writing process would necessarily proceed without the security of knowing which principles or goals they were attempting to reflect. A corollary was that whatever principles would emerge at the end of the process would be of a minimalist, common-denominator variety.

Divergent learning styles played a role here: Bégin and Caplan were quick verbalizers, generalizers, and synthesizers, perhaps more attuned to an inductive process, while Murphy and Glaze seemed to favour a more step-wise, logical approach, with a pains-taking orientation to the discussion of issues, suggesting a greater ease with the deductive approach (Researcher G, Interview, 1995).

To the mix of contrasting backgrounds, modes of thinking, viewpoints, learning styles, and learning needs of the commissioners that skewed the learning process toward a messy, convoluted inductiveness within RCOL, should be added the bifurcated and fractured relationship of commissioners with researchers in knowledge creation. Cairns (1990) observed that, within the Macdonald Commission, while commissioners and researchers may have been locked into a system of interdependence, their mutual role expectations did not mesh easily. Researchers from academic backgrounds cherished their independence and chafed at constraints such as commissioner-driven choices of subject matter and

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timetables for discussion; commissioners, who would drift in and out of the process, could only provide "selective and intermittent" guidance to the research process (Cairns, 1990, p.96). In other words, the knowledge-generating and interpretation streams within Macdonald, that is, commissioners and researchers, tended to bifurcate. Within RCOL, a similar cleft developed, here articulated, somewhat indelicately, by Researcher A (Interview, 1995):

The main constraints [within RCOL] were a lack of organizational model for the writing tasks and the lack of coordination of people who were working there. The Report could have been richer: when time collapsed, researchers couldn't respond to each others' work. At the end of the process, very few commissioner meetings were attended by more than one or two researchers because we were all so busy writing. Before this collapse of time, we had the luxury of five commissioners and six or seven researchers at these meetings. At some point the commissioners must have been unhappy that they were outnumbered and out-IQ'd.

The big picture, under these circumstances, could only be pieced together, one piece of the puzzle at a time, in a convoluted and iterative fashion, as researchers' writing commitments forced them to labour in greater isolation, beyond bifurcation into fracture. When coupled with the frequent absences of commissioners from headquarters, increasing researcher isolation meant that a step-by-step collective understanding of what was being written became impossible.

In addition to learning styles, I refer again to the learning needs induced by the outsider, non-expert status of most of the commissioners that played a large role in the messy, convoluted learning process. Non-expertness necessarily implies that some commissioners would not begin the process with the certainties, articulated principles, and cohesive understandings that one would normally associate with the use of the word "expert." This meant that many of the issues under discussion had to learned, starting with a self-acknowledged low-level knowledge base. Although several commissioners, for example, understood the principles and issues of, say, educational governance, none save Glaze was up to speed on a number of complex issues relating to the teaching and learning process, knowledge that is by definition the semi-private domain of professional educators. At a practical level, by that juncture in April 1994, very little time could have been devoted to visioning, imaging, and goal defining anyway, as the impetus to write was too compelling, in light of a scant two-thirds of a year left in the mandate.

Caplan's self-described cognitive epiphany in the spring of 1994 deserves a little more space here, as he was critical in various roles: co-chair, idea spinner, micropolitician, and writer. Bégin (Interview,
1995) recalled, with some degree of irritation, Caplan's reluctance to commit to basic agreements until he reached a comfort level with his personal knowledge base:

One day out of the blue, I still don't understand it, Gerry said: "I'm ready, let's go," and until that day there was no report. It's always been an absolute puzzle to me...like he was giving permission that now he would participate in the discussion, and he did, and we were able to start the discussion. I asked myself: Did a politician talk to him or what happened? Is it the natural evolution of [his] thinking that he became ready or did an external element come into the picture? I'll never know. It was dramatic and sudden...For one year Gerry would say: "I can't discuss, I'm not ready." It blocked the discussion and it was an atmosphere defined in terms of power and control, and from that day when we started articulating together basic ideas to see where the report was going, another commissioner, who was also into power and control, got excited by the world of ideas...and joined in...My analysis was that strangely, and in an unhealthy way, I didn't know how to deal with the majority of people on the commission defining everything in terms of power and control, instead of that dimension being minimal and the group getting excited about ideas about where could the system go, which I found exciting.

At one level, Caplan's epiphany is important to understanding how the knowledge base within RCOL was constructed, if not for all the players, at least for one of the key players. In Chapter 1, I noted Prestine's (1995) differentiation between two definitions of knowledge base, one functionalist and external, the other constructivist and internal. Caplan's perception (Interview, 1995) of his own learning process closely resembles Prestine's constructivist understanding of building a personal knowledge base, "that knowledge can only be understood by the individual as it is constructed by the mind" (1995, p. 279). He estimated that it took well over a year of listening, reading, debating, and questioning before he had internalized the issues. He declared his "Pauline epiphany" thirteen or so months after the formation of RCOL, and announced to fellow commissioners that he at last was "ready to discuss" his ideas on what should be committed to in the Report, and he began to promote the concept of "engines," in tandem with other commissioners. For Caplan, perhaps, this "volte face" should be viewed less as a dramatic conversion, in the Pauline sense, than as a product of a time-consuming process of personal knowledge construction after one year of reading, discussions, public hearings, and inter-commissioner conflict. (Pauline epiphany refers to the sudden conversion of Saul of Tarsus (St. Paul), a Jewish persecutor of converts to fledgling Christianity, as he was "blinded by the light" on his way to Damascus).

At another level, Bégin's observations about Caplan's epiphany indicate more than puzzlement. There is a hint of scepticism about what motivated Caplan, about whether the impetus to discuss was
more political than cognitive in origin. Some researchers viewed Caplan’s cognitive epiphany more as a micropolitical tactic he employed to ensure greater influence on the shape of the *Report*. In this scenario, several researchers recalled hearing Caplan say, on more than one occasion, that he could have written the *Report* by himself right after the hearings finished in December 1993. This statement indicated to these researchers that the idea of his “sudden conversion” was largely a concoction. They speculated that the very tight time frame left by the Sping of 1994 worked to Caplan’s advantage in two ways. First, the inability to reach a principled, consensual agreement on what to say in the *Report* through internal deliberations meant that a full disclosure of value and idea preferences would be precluded, and that their articulation would necessarily take place largely through the writing process. Secondly, several researcher asserted, of all the commissioners, Caplan was by far the most able to use the writing process to his own advantage. In addition to his other knowledges and skills, Caplan was an established professional writer. As a long time opinion piece writer for *The Toronto Star*, to cite his most recent career orientation, Caplan had demonstrated the depth of his political convictions and an admirable facility as an argument-maker, polemicist, and word-smith. Sceptical researchers contended that the unfolding of the writing process amply demonstrated that this ability to write was used by Caplan as a highly-personalized lever of power to influence his impact on the *Report* and that other commissioners could not compete with him in this context.

Micropolitics Meets Epiphany

In the first months of 1994 within RCOL, as collective decision-making and liaison in the form of commissioner meetings became patently painful and inefficient, the feeling grew that a sense of direction was missing, and that core tasks could not be agreed upon. The sense of deliberations going nowhere, with time running out, motivated three researchers to confront the co-chairs in abrupt fashion on April 17, 1994 (after a meeting with the Learning Partnership in Markham). The researchers were determined to put an end to what they perceived as a lack of direction in the process. Their frustrations were mainly targeted towards the co-chairs and, for some, towards the executive director, here articulated by Researcher A (Interview, 1995):

There was an abrogation of responsibilities by the co-chairs to be co-chairs: they didn't compel the other commissioners to make it work. The executive director didn't really serve in that capacity; she had become in effect the sixth commissioner; that's when
researchers were left on their own...Procedures and assurances to see that [the work] was followed through were never established...At this stage [researchers] were doing the bulk of the work but were not allowed to put closure on anything. There was lots of fraudulence in the [deliberation] process...It lacked candour, i.e., this is what I believe and I'm going to stand up for it...

The researchers demanded that the co-chairs put an end to discussion for discussion sake, and give a green light to the researchers to start writing the Report. Bégin (Interview, 1995) recalled that this confrontation felt like an "electroshock" and she praised the "courage" of the three researchers, soon to be dubbed "senior" researchers, in bringing the matter to a head. At about the same time Caplan underwent his self-described "Pauline epiphany," his personal, cognitive, leap forward.

The combination of these two factors (confrontation and epiphany) subsequently committed the commissioners and researchers to agree to an outline of the Report (to be revised many times) and within a few weeks, the drafts of chapters flowed forth from researchers. A researcher-written piece on curriculum, over 100 pages in length, was first up for discussion. From here on until December 1994, commissioners would react to, comment upon, add to or delete from, researcher-written drafts. The written drafts provided a structure for commissioner discussions, and a more task-oriented purpose, that had eluded RCOL earlier in the post-hearings phase.

Issue Identification and The Fight For Ideas

From an analytical point of view, issue identification within RCOL presents a number of interesting perspectives about the role that ideas played. Within RCOL, fighting for ideas took on a hard, personal edge. Caplan (Interview, 1995) acknowledged that internal deliberations were at times acrimonious, but that he did not find this unusual, as he complimented some of his colleagues:

I have a substantial regard for my colleagues despite the acrimony, but I expected [that acrimony] from my experience on the Broadcasting Commission. If things got intense, I'd screw off, and leave the room. Avis Glaze was out to lunch on some issues, right on others. I respected Monique Bégin's acuity and analytical ability, Manisha Bharti's common sense, Dennis Murphy's general liberalism on most issues. On the research team, Suzanne Ziegler, Nancy Watson, and Wayne Burnett were towers of strength, and Julie Lindhout was a storehouse of knowledge: it was a powerful group.

Stone's conception (1988) of ideas in the political process as an exercise that is affective, suasive, and
coercive has some resonance: RCOL was a politicized and political instrument, and ideas were its lifeblood. The process of knowledge construction was laced with emotion, not only in the hearings but also within the Commission itself, though in the latter case not all emotive energy was expended on the discussion of ideas. Certainly, many of the briefs presented in the hearings, and the process of writing the Report, resembled the logic of argumentation, with a sensitivity to the idea that a wide audience needed to be persuaded by the weight of the evidence and the need to legitimate that appeal with reference to recognized public values. Coercion, too, played a role within RCOL: not everyone's ideas were equal, and some players were not too subtly edged out of the process. Policy-oriented commissions are idea-rich, to the point of inducing cognitive overload and dissonance. The sources of ideas within the process are many, even more than the streams of hearings and research as described in Chapter 2, including sources like personal reading, formal and informal networks, and other policy networks. Within RCOL, the problem was not so much recognizing that ideas played a central role, but rather how to sort out and organize ideas in a way conducive to internal understanding and analysis, particularly in the interpretation of the ideas, and what significance they should be assigned. Also of import was the question of which ideas would make it to the "agenda" stage and whose ideas would matter most.

Issue Identification and Divergent Sources

How issues were chosen for discussion was described by Murphy (Interview, 1995) as a process of "by guess and by God," or in other words a different process described each major issue. Like other aspects of the process, commissioners avoided what may be called a deductive or step-wise approach to problem definition. Bégin (Interview, 1995) explained:

Right from the start I tried to convince my colleagues that the way to start working on the Report and recommendations was to force ourselves to diagnose the problem in rough terms and discuss what kind of recommendations we saw. I had no success because [commissioners] did not want to develop a framework to explain where things fit.

I am sensitive to Kingdon's admonition (1984) that trying to find the ultimate source of an idea is a fruitless exercise, as no one or no one source owns an idea, but passes it along the policy path with or without modification. Nevertheless, despite this caveat, it should be recognized that issue identification within RCOL was supported by each major stream of activity, externally and internally, and that each component played some role in knowledge generation. RCOL, after all, was a small world that lasted
for a brief time, and its members have been forthright in acknowledging the impacts of various ideas. Kingdon's advice notwithstanding, the non-expert status of four of the five commissioners meant, by definition, that an in-depth perspective on the Ontario public school system had to be learned during the process, and was not possessed by them before they embarked on their RCOL journey. Thus the public consultation phase identified, among other things, the problem of teacher overload, the 40 percent factor, information technology, the "cacophony" factor, issues of public choice, and Roman Catholic and francophone concerns, to name a few of the more salient. Policy ideas like early childhood education (ECE) could shift from one arena (Premier's Council) to another (RCOL), both connected by Béggin's participation. Policy ideas like the College of Teachers were part of the past and unfinished educational agenda, and had new life breathed into them by internal advocates.

Idea Advocates and Critics

In the literature on policy analysis a distinction is frequently made between the stances taken in policy formulation, often focusing on the roles of advocate, analyst, and critic. An advocate indicates "a person who is strongly biased in favour of the policy under consideration"; a critic is a person strongly biased against a policy or idea under consideration (Hambrick, 1974, p.475). On the other hand, the pragmatic analyst attempts to take an objective, disinterested position on problems that arise "out of conflicting valuations of existing patterns of activity" (Anderson, 1987, p.40). From this perspective, much of the ideational basis of the Report is less a product of disinterested policy analysis than a reflection of commissioner and researcher advocacy, as ideas, proposals, and recommendations were matched with their champions within the Commission. Three engines had vigorous advocates: community education was spearheaded by Murphy and was inspired by a faith-based notion of the role of the community in education; information technology was championed by Caplan and was invigorated by school visits; and teacher education and professional development were forwarded by Caplan and Béggin, based on what they heard in hearings, school visits, from their prodigious readings, and spurred on by the advocacy, and considerable expertise, of a researcher. Ideas in support of The College of Teachers and the Assessment Agency came primarily from two different researchers, with the latter idea getting a boost during Minister Dave Cooke's consultation; Murphy was the strongest commissioner supporter of the College. Béggin had a career-long commitment to gender issues, and in the hearings some

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presenters decried the achievement levels of females in mathematics and science. However, this topic received little discussion within RCOL, perhaps deflated by research that showed that relative to males, females in Ontario had higher graduation rates from secondary schools, community colleges, and undergraduate programs at universities. That the gender imbalance now seemed skewed against males received no sustained discussion within RCOL. The much-publicized issue of school violence was evoked in most hearings, regardless of which region of Ontario, and whether the setting was urban, suburban, or rural. Although Glaze on a number of occasions spoke of the need for RCOL to address this issue, the other commissioners decided to make only passing reference to it in the Report, saying that the initiatives of the province and of boards to ameliorate this problem required no additional response from RCOL. A recommendation for Black- or Afro-centred schools was pushed forward by Caplan and a researcher, and was identified by several community groups in the hearings. Public funding for non-Catholic religious schools, as recommended by the Shapiro Commission (1985), was a familiar refrain of the hearings, and championed by Murphy.

When not wearing advocacy hats, RCOLers played the role of critics. The window of opportunity for an idea to survive for inclusion in the Report would be opened when an idea was strongly advocated by individuals attached to the commissioner and researcher streams. Conversely, if an idea was vociferously opposed by someone in the commissioner stream, particularly by a co-chair, an idea had little chance of survival. Thus, although Glaze favoured elevating accountability as an engine and wanted strong mandated measures to promote it, the consistent opposition from the co-chairs blocked its development in this fashion. Similarly, as I also discuss below, although most commissioners were won over by Murphy's arguments for public funding to non-Catholic religious schools, Caplan's steadfast and increasingly vehement denunciations of this proposal amounted to a veto of it.

Idea Sexiness and Issue Identification

If in Stone's conception (1989) the discussion of ideas is defined by passion, persuasion, and coercion, other descriptors are also fundamental to understanding the flow of ideas through RCOL. One of these words is "sexiness," undoubtedly a close cousin to passion, a noun that even Msgr. Murphy would employ on occasion to describe the appeal of an idea. Simply put, sexiness within RCOL meant that certain ideas or concepts "turned on" the commissioners while others left them cold. The four
engines, for example, were very much a concept developed, promoted, and defended by the commissioners. The four engines, once on the agenda, were never allowed off the "front burner" because the commissioners kept them there. Researcher scepticism about the engines, however, did not deter commissioner enthusiasm and the engines would be showcased in the Report, with much of the text on them written by still-unconvinced researchers. The idea of accountability, which also made it to the Report stage, was "sexy" in the hearings and for Glaze and Minister Cooke, but the researchers found the co-chairs very slow to react to ideas associated with this concept. Governance was another concept in which the commissioners, except for Glaze, had a visible lack of interest. An idea like efficiency, identified in Canadian and American literature as a "core value" of publicly-funded education (Mawhinney, 1993), was anathema to Caplan, politically "unsexy" so to speak, and the other commissioners acquiesced to his demands to give it short shrift. While curriculum-related issues received all of the attention of other commissioners, Caplan (Interview, 1995) was clearly less interested in this topic than his colleagues as he felt that the quality of the teacher outweighed the importance of curriculum. On the other hand, as I noted in the section above on public hearings, for many teachers, students, parents, and education reform groups, curriculum and assessment issues were at the heart of their concerns about the publicly-funded education system, a topic I further probe in Chapter 6 in the "Secondary Schools Debate". Idea "sexiness," then, was strongly correlated with how much of a profile that idea would receive in the Report, and the degree of cooperation and interest forthcoming from the commissioners on the discussion of a given topic.

Issue Identification: Arbitrariness and Bias

Caplan's explanation (Interview, 1995) of the discussion process captured the untidiness of it and how ideas got discussed, accepted or rejected. From his description, it is clear that he viewed it as arbitrary and politically-driven, and not primarily as a conceptually-driven or philosophically-consistent process. For Caplan, the discussion process was a rough and tumble exercise in democracy:

Everybody had something they cared about, such as Dennis Murphy's support for small scale democracy and community alliances. Any different person could have injected ideas: this also was my experience from the Broadcasting Commission. It was a pure democracy, anybody could say or inject what they wanted if they pressed hard enough....The discussion process was arbitrary: the earlier in process you introduce[d] an idea, the better [were] the chances for getting it in the Report...The harder you [fought] for it, the more
likely it [would] get in...unless it [was] offensive.

While ideology and values did play a major role within RCOL in the overall consideration of whether an idea would be acceptable, no ideological or value framework was consistently applied to accepting or rejecting ideas across a broad spectrum. This "laissez-faire" approach at "going along to get along" was grounded in a very practical tautology: the growing size of the Report allowed for a great deal of inclusiveness, and the burgeoning size was a reflection of this harmonizing. But the discussion of ideas within RCOL was not as arbitrary or random as Caplan used the notion. For example, Catholic and francophone issues were clearly identified in the hearings, forcefully represented within RCOL by a commissioner and a co-chair, and protected by governmental mandate from encroachment. Given these factors, the probability that these communities' agendas would be given a respectful treatment within RCOL was very high, and not subject to arbitrariness or randomness at all. The stewardship over certain ideas by commissioners also ensured that some ideas were never left to languish; consistent advocacy over an extended period does not jive with an arbitrariness that suggests a hit-and-miss, sporadic approach. Caplan should know this better than any RCOLer: he tenaciously promoted and defended his own preferences once they were formed; and in addition, he personally ensured that any core ideas that he supported, as well as pet projects, and his distinctively written pieces, would find their way into the Report, even if they had been edited out of an earlier draft or amended by others.

Bias is another word that should be added to the lexicon to describe RCOL issue identification and the choice process for the survival of ideas. Given the pronounced insider/outsider cleft in commissioner and researcher ranks, the ideas of individuals within RCOL were, from the orientation process onwards, not of equal value, and who said what was on many occasions more important than what was said. Insider/outsider bias, preordaining idea acceptability, hence would serve as another counterweight to arbitrariness of the process.

Time As A Constraint To Issue Identification

One factor remains that had a major impact on the nature of internal deliberations, a variable underscored by Cairns (1990), Cameron (1993), and Simeon (1987): time as a constraint. In a diverse collectivity of work, the quality of the ideas and of those who espouse them counts heavily in the learning and issue identification equation of commissions, but no variable looms in importance over time as a
constraint. Time available for these activities is limited to a fraction of the mandate, and its rapidly-dwindling quantum poses a particular problem if the ideas and concepts are complex, interrelated, new, and not directly related to one's field of professional expertise.

After the April 1994 confrontation within RCOL, talk about ideas, when and if commissioners were so disposed, gave way to talk about chapter drafts written by researchers. This left nine months to write and agree upon the Report. Glaze (Interview, 1995) concluded that the learning process and the discussion of ideas were characterized by a superficiality driven by a lack of, and a waste of, time:

For me it was a very frustrating process. People needed time to understand issues and feel comfortable with them. I was anxious because I felt we had wasted too much time. Others wanted to make sure that they understood the issues very clearly before they started to make recommendations...There was a lack of time to learn about issues to make well informed decisions. Some commissioners had an incomplete picture; I don't know if they realize that even now.

Several researchers thought that the frequent absence of commissioners from RCOL headquarters, for whatever reason, made the discussion process unnecessarily iterative, here articulated by Researcher A (Interview, 1995):

We kept revisiting ground. The commissioners would disappear for two or three weeks at a time. As deadlines came near, commissioners were taking their vacations and researchers were told to postpone theirs. When they returned, the commissioners would want to recover lost ground.

I deal with the issue of time, but as catalyst not a constraint, in the discussion below of the writing process.

THE WRITING PROCESS

The writing of the Report from start to finish was accomplished in eight and a half months, from the confrontation of three researchers with the co-chairs in mid-April 1994, to the frantic last touches applied to final drafts of several chapters in the second week of December. The remaining days before Christmas 1994 were spent proofreading the "blues" (printer's proofs).

During the first three months of 1994, Bégin (Interview, 1995) lamented that the commissioners could not even agree to think about a table of contents, and that Caplan would not commit to any outline until April 1994, when he declared that he was ready to write. Once kick-started by confrontation and
epiphany, however, the writing process accelerated quickly. Like the deliberation process that weaved through it, the writing process was full of ambiguity about ends and means, an uneasy juxtaposition of principles and pragmatism, arbitrarily ad hoc but rarely fluid, a rough and tumble democracy in which some were more equal than others, with every chapter written by a varying combination of RCOLers in a different fashion, and a contest of wills and endurance in which almost everyone got a piece of the action, but not necessarily an equal piece.

Aside from the question of time devoted to it, I describe the writing of the Report as the core process of knowledge construction because commissioners and researchers were unanimous in identifying the Report as the sine qua non of the Commission, the product by which their collective labour would be judged by the audience to whom it was addressed. Like the commissioners in the Macdonald Commission (Simeon, 1987) and the Pepin-Robarts Task Force (Cameron, 1993), RCOLers knew that a report was more than just a formal expectation of their mandate: it was a tangible legacy of their commitment to the articulation of public interest plus a vital and highly-personalized instrument to influence policy development and shape public opinion.

During the writing process, the tasks faced by RCOL were manifold. Some tasks were easily dispensed with, while others would feed on the energies of the five commissioners, two executive directors, nine researchers, a half-dozen support staff, and various outsiders, sometimes for months on end: the tendering of contracts for outside editing, translation, printing and meetings with outside contract representatives; the compiling of a distribution list; the discussion about, and the execution of, outside graphic work/design; the numerous revisions of the table of contents; the agreeing and disagreeing about tone, style and format; the writing of the draft chapters; the reiterative patching together of parts and major and minor revisions; the incorporation of some comments of the four outside readers; the in-house and outside editing; the "signing off" on various sections and ultimately on whole chapters; the collection of front- and end-matter (the voluminous attachments and appendices); the translation into French (involving much explanation as to terms and meanings based on the English original); the conceptualization, design, and manufacturing of the CD-ROM version; and the contracted printing of copies in both official languages.

In the period from January to April the conceptualization of what was to be written about emerged slowly from the discussion process, but it was the writing process itself that clarified the issue
of the shape of the Report. In April, the commissioners discussed the core message, agreeing that RCOL could not offer "magic solutions" but should offer a vision of "realistic hope", while "striking the balance". In this excerpt from my observation notes, some of the flavour of this discussion is captured:

Notes: April 18 - Di Cecco: The system seeks a perfect model but we can only suggest a few good things. Glaze: Don't overuse idea about diminishing prospects, people expect magic from royal commissioners but we should not offer them magic. We should offer them lots of hope and realism. Murphy: But we want to involve the community more and address new social issues in a realistic fashion...The 80s won't be returning...Our theme should be striking the balance. Bégin: Don't be pessimistic or utopian; don't take an official tone or magic approach. The language of the report [should show that] we cut through the b.s.! Glaze: But we need idealism on student learning; more kids can succeed in our system. Don't give into pessimistic realism!

By mid-April, the commissioners also identified some of their priorities, in the form of the first two engines, early childhood education and teacher education. The "hope" element was clearly behind the ECE recommendation, given that the budgetary constraints of the times did not auger well for its implementation.

Notes: April 18 - Caplan: Our priorities should be ECE (he doesn't know if the government will accept this), and teacher education and development, not site-based management. Bégin: We need to open up other changes in the system...Can we choose a limited number of recommendations to accomplish this? Glaze: Yes, we need ECE to prevent student problems but governance is also important, we need to grapple with it...There are great public expectations that we should deal with it. Bharti: What about the stuff that we know won't get passed? Caplan: We want to show possibilities...ECE is not a sure bet.

The task of writing large chunks of the Report was taken on by the researchers largely by a process of "default" (Researcher A, Interview, 1995). When hired or seconded, no researcher had the expectation that she or he would be the principal author of anything. As the meandering discussions ensued, several researchers correctly predicted that they would have to assume an active writing role, and were frustrated that they were not given the signal to start writing much earlier in the process (Researchers A, B, F, and G, Interviews, 1995).

A Non-linear Equation

Born out of micropolitical and cognitive struggle, with an unforgiving deadline playing the role
of midwife, the writing process did not unfold as a natural progression from previous stages. Rather than following internal deliberations in a linear pattern, writing the Report subsumed the work of internal discussion, a snake consuming its own tail.

After late April 1994 within RCOL, the writing process was woven into various internal deliberation activities such as issue identification, problem identification, conceptualization, debating the general direction of the Report, and discussing goals and values. It was also through the give and take of writing that the pieces of research began to fit together, and as the process of interpretation coalesced, a type of consensus emerged. Report writing in this context functioned as a reciprocal element that built and clarified knowledge as it interacted with spurts of internal deliberation, research, and other inputs.

Time As a Constraint and a Catalyst For Writing

Of the twenty-one months in the total mandate, the writing process absorbed about forty-five per cent of scheduled time. Part of the explanation for this situation lies in a set of related factors relevant to RCOL: orientation and public hearings substantially consumed the time available (seven months); the pre-writing discussion process involved much administriva and interpretation of issues (four months) with much of the substantive work lying still ahead; commissioners and some researchers drifted in and out of both the internal deliberation and the writing processes, inhibiting the development of a fluid, collective rhythm (holidays, other commitments, days in between commissioner meetings); and, in the space of five months, as tasks changed suddenly from hearings to internal discussions to the business of writing, new and unfamiliar ways of working needed to be tried and tested in a time-consuming, ad hoc fashion. Because this writing phase was neither linear nor mechanical in the way it unfolded, it defied the imposition of internally-defined time-lines and schedules, particularly when the logjam of drafts accumulated for the intimate perusal of commissioners (Cameron, 1993; Cairns, 1990; Simeon, 1987).

Time also acted as a catalyst within RCOL. In this way, the writing process within RCOL shared salient characteristics with the same activity within the Macdonald Commission (Simeon, 1987) and the Pepin-Robarts Task Force (Cameron, 1993). In Canada of late, much discussion of the Krever and Somalia commissions has centred on their chairs' unsuccessful attempts to get the federal government to agree to an extension of deadlines; time in this context was portrayed as an unalloyed constraint. On the other hand, other commissions, and certainly RCOL, have been driven by their collective acceptance of
a deadline to produce a report on time. For RCOL, the drive to produce the findings of an inquiry within the time allotted by the mandate was probably the most significant spur-to-action. For RCOL, time was also a powerful motivating or galvanizing force for members that had few other overarching organizational goals or ways of working together in a cultural sense. Meeting this commitment imbued RCOLers with a sense of mission or purpose that was otherwise lacking. Because a highly adhocratic commission like RCOL could not benefit from internally-constructed standard operating procedures and routines to guide the work process (Cairns, 1990; March & Olsen, 1989; Mintzberg, 1979), collective commitments to deadlines (internally-defined) and galvanizing events (internal/external) picked up the slack to pattern and energize organizational behaviour.

The Writing Process and Micropolitics

The deadline story within RCOL has an interesting twist. I was told by several researchers that in his pre-epiphany period Caplan contemplated asking the government for an extension of the mandate. He thought that, given the complexity and scope of the issues and the slow progress within RCOL, there was little chance that the deadline would be met. When news of his imputed intention circulated among other RCOLers in the spring of 1994, several core researchers (i.e., those on whom the co-chairs relied most) were adamant that they would not work beyond the deadline, and that if the commitment to the deadline was not sincere, then they would consider "bailing out" at the earliest opportunity. This micropolitical activity had the intended effect, and although there were some continuing doubts about whether the deadline would be reached, the commitment to reach it as closely as possible never became a serious issue raised openly again. This co-chair/researcher confrontation about respecting the deadline segued into the major co-chair/researcher confrontation about giving a green-light to researchers to start developing the Report itself.

The writing experience had other micropolitical ramifications. Putting ideas into prose within a very finite time-frame, and being subjected to intense pressure from commissioners who had differing views, required from researchers a high level of literacy and inter-personal skills, the ability to report and think with a bare modicum of direction, and the endurance of a marathon runner. Not all the researchers could summon the energy or otherwise manage this sorting, sifting, categorizing, and interrelating of phenomena equally well. After it became apparent that researcher X or Y could not deliver a product to
satisfy the commissioners, that particular piece of writing would be loaded onto another researcher, or farmed out to an outside writer. The ability to satisfy commissioners was strongly correlated to (non-)MET affiliation, itself a reflection of the play of inside/outside bias. Some researchers were subsequently "encouraged to leave" RCOL, and departed, with a sigh of relief they say, at the first available opportunity. Denied a voice, these researchers exchanged unrequited loyalty for the exit option (Hirschman, 1970). Despite the exodus, no fresh replacements were acquired. With researcher meltdown came two related problems: an overburdening of key researchers, and their subsequent involvement in the writing of chapters for which they possessed little expertise (Researcher F, Interview, 1995).

The Structuring of Writing and Organizational Memory

Researcher A (Interview, 1995) contended that the Report was written without the aid of a conceptual or value framework and that the size of the chapters grew in direct proportion to the degree of uncertainty about the goals RCOL should have been trying to articulate. This researcher also maintained that the discussion of values within RCOL was arbitrary, but with the emphasis that it was unnecessarily so, creating difficulties for the researchers in the writing process as time rapidly dwindled. In this researcher's words:

We fired our arrow at the wall, then painted a target around it. Commissioners never said: "Here's what we heard, here's what we believe and think, here's our thesis." Values were not clarified for the purposes of writing; that's why some chapters started out as fifteen focused pages and ended up being 80 or more unfocused pages...Who was at meetings to discuss an issue was never made clear, leading to a random, arbitrary process as to how ideas got discussed. The public hearings took up one-third of the schedule, one-third was protracted discussion, with little closure, and one-third was the writing process. Thinking on our feet replaced thinking, talking, and discussion. The research team wrote chapters on their feet and values were not clarified for this purpose at all. Values were not extracted from hearings and identified as to where we were going.

The writing of the Report did not begin with a discussion of visions, values, and goals and proceed to an orderly discussion of various domains and how they relate to the overall vision of the system. The discussion of vision, values, and goals was for the most part avoided, as such discussion was perceived as being potentially "derailing" in the often volatile climate within RCOL, the desire of Murphy and Glaze for such a discourse notwithstanding. Moreover, previous attempts at such discussions had invariably taken a "circular pattern" with no closure on the horizon, and come late April, any semblance
of "dithering" was to be shunned at all costs.

Notes: April 28 - Di Cecco says that vision/goal discussions among the commissioners are usually circular. We should start the discussion with priorities, and vision and goals will follow.

The observation notes give a pragmatic reason why "the big picture" was not sketched before the small strokes were applied to the canvas. Quite simply, the commissioners acknowledged that they worked best when they proceeded from the concrete to the abstract, and certain topics were more concrete than others. Moreover, a highly-structured draft chapter was concrete, a discussion paper with "talking points" was not.

Notes: May 18 - Bégin: It just occurred to me that we don't work well with abstract issues...but we work well on issues like teacher education.

June 8 - A researcher talks about the writing process, that commissioners react better when pieces with recommendations are written by researchers. Two researchers didn't do this (they had discussion points instead) and are being given a hard time by commissioners. The researcher says the commissioners lack a vision of where to go, they disagree on some points, but don't discuss much together.

The one serious attempt to discuss "broad organizers" during this process, to structure the writing, produced no fruit. Caplan (Interview, 1995) contended that the "broad organizer" concept emerged too late in the process to have any impact:

[In June a researcher] wrote three or four different principles [to provide a type of value and conceptual framework]...If [this researcher] had developed them early in the process rather than during the "tenth draft", it may have structured the Report, but by the time he introduced them, nobody had the energy to use them, and in the end they all disappeared.

My observation notes show that the idea of broad organizers had a shelf-life of about one month within RCOL:

Notes: June 16 - A researcher says the approach of MET and RCOL is too much like a lexicon e.g., excellence, equity, accountability, diversity, participation, choice. He says we need broader organizers like focus, quality, coherence, responsiveness, relevance, efficiency. These can be used to address a cluster of interlocking problems. Researchers are now joined by commissioners, and the list of organizers presented and discussed. Murphy: How are you going to connect engines? Commissioners agree to let two researchers rewrite chapters 1 and 2 using the above broader organizers.

July 13 - Caplan: We don't convey the cacophony and complicatedness of situation—[The
Ideas would thus be generated inductively through the protracted discussion of draft chapters, and not deduced from a well-structured hierarchy of values, principles, goals, and vision. Researchers who could produce this inductive structure were "rewarded" with more writing responsibilities, and those that could not were sanctioned by isolation. Given these circumstances, that norms and values emerged through the hauling and pulling of the writing process rather than structuring it a priori would not have surprised Majone (1989, p.24):

...[I]n the decisionist view rational policy analysis can begin only after the relevant values have been authoritatively determined. In fact, these values are neither given nor constant, but are themselves a function of the policy-making process that they are supposed to guide.

Feldman's (1989) observations on the role of issue interpretation and framing in the writing process (with a rare example from the world of education), are noteworthy in pointing out their interdependent relationship:

Interpretation involves categorizing, the "framing" of issues, e.g., when we associate discrimination with educational testing, we make equality a relevant concern; when we associate it with with making admissions decisions, we make pragmatism relevant...This process of associating concerns with issues affects what kinds of problems we think we have and also what kinds of solutions seem appropriate to them...

Written documents play an important role in this interpretation process...An author must take a complex reality and structure it into a linear, more simple representation...The written document establishes a frame that becomes part of the organizational memory. The interpretation of an issue contained in a paper is determined by the inclusion and exclusion of information, and the information contained is a mixture of relevant past information and present interests. (p. 91)

Establishing a memory for a short-lived organization that must concurrently construct its own knowledge base, pursue other important purposes, and build an organization, probably has a greater significance for a policy-oriented commission than for a more stable, institutionalized bureaucracy. For RCOL, the writing process simultaneously structured and sustained the organization.
Argumentation, Norm-setting, and Persuasion

The writing process within RCOL was not limited to problem identification and issue interpretation, and inductively, the production of a vision (of sorts), and the framing of superordinate goals of the education system. This is part of the writing equation, but not the whole. Problems may be identified and issues interpreted, but the requirements of producing a document that will undergo intense public and political scrutiny necessarily moves its players to argue. This argumentation occurs internally among commissioners and researchers; its external manifestation is a written report. The logic of public argumentation relies less on demonstrable proofs and more on features of dialectical and rhetorical reasoning, as Majone (1989) underscores:

The impossibility of proving what the correct action is in most practical situations weakens the credibility of analysis as problem solving, but it does not imply that information, discussion, and argument are irrelevant. We reason even when we do not calculate—in setting norms and formulating problems, in presenting evidence for or against a proposal, in offering or rejecting criticism. In all these cases we do not demonstrate, but argue. (p. 22)

Besides the elements of the internal deliberations subsumed by the process of writing the Report, the proverbial putting of pen to paper took on other tasks as well: the setting of norms, the inclusion or exclusion of evidence and its presentation, the detailing of a number of arguments wrapped up in a larger argument, and the articulation of a persuasive tone and logic embedded in each argument.

Because RCOLers were constructing public knowledge in the form of an extended argument, a critical task was norm-setting more than goal-setting and solution-finding:

It is widely assumed that public deliberation and public policy are primarily concerned with setting goals and finding the means to achieve them. Actually, the most important function both of public deliberation and of policy-making is defining the norms that determine certain conditions are to be regarded as policy problems. Objective conditions are seldom so compelling and so unambiguous that they set the policy agenda or dictate the appropriate conceptualization. (Majone, 1989, pp. 23-24)

From this perspective, the four engines as defined by RCOL were not solutions to clearly-identified problems, but rather a normative re-defining of what spheres of activity should be undertaken by publicly-funded education. Early childhood education is the clearest example of this norm-setting, redefining the scope of public education beyond the confines of Kindergarten to OAC, and arguing that much more attention and investment should be directed to the early school years. Community education redefines the
school-community nexus, arguing for greater local support for the wider goals of schooling, and for an inclusion of more local voices in shaping the agenda of public schools. The engine of information technology redefines the goals of schooling to accommodate the emerging realm of a knowledge-based society and argues that a fundamental change in the nature of teaching and learning is necessary to connect schools to the world of technology. The engine of teacher education and development is premised on a radical restructuring of the content of these activities, arguing for a considerable change in the roles of those institutions that presently control teacher education and professional development.

Reaching the Audience

The "audience" that the commissioners wanted to reach was large and varied, appealing to a range of readers with distinctly different interests, for whom different parts of the Report would matter more than others: governmental policy-makers, inside stakeholders such as representatives from boards, trustee and teacher associations, outside stakeholders including parents, students, and interest groups, the media, and the interested public. Majone (1989, p.41) implies that communicating to such a diverse audience may create problems for persuasion: "...[I]n order to be persuasive, evidence and arguments must be chosen with a particular audience in mind; the same conclusions may have to be justified differently in different contexts."

The evolution of the Report's format was directly connected to the evolving perception that if the commissioners wanted their arguments to persuade their diverse audiences, three types of report would be necessary: a long version, a short version, and a CD-ROM version. The idea for the shorter version emerged late in the mandate, well into the summer of 1994, and was a response to the ballooning size of some chapters, the earlier commitment for a terse document with a total of 150 to 200 pages notwithstanding (Observation notes, April 28, 1994). The longer version, eventually growing to four separate volumes, was seen by commissioners as more of interest to a narrower group of stakeholders and specialists, and thus the more modestly-sized tome was developed to capture the interests of a lay audience. The idea for separate, colour-coded volumes came from the commissioners early in the process, sparked by their enthusiastic response to the written work of one researcher, which they wanted to "showcase" separately (Researcher F, Interview, 1995). The acceptance of a researcher's idea for a CD-ROM version was also a latecomer, and its design and content were assembled in great haste in the midst
of the document-producing process by a young outside consultant and by Murphy. The boxed set of the
Short Version and the four volumes of the longer version totalled 631 pages, with 167 recommendations,
and included the CD-ROM's multi-media perspective on the process and findings of the Commission.

Commissioners as Writers

Writing in order to persuade diverse audiences involved not only core researchers but also some
commissioners. Of the commissioners, Caplan was by far the most active writer, penning the 80-page
Short Version of the Report, the introductions to many of the chapters, and substantial pieces here and
there throughout the document (e.g., information technology). Bégin was the primary author on
francophone issues. Murphy contributed to the chapters on Catholic education and community
alliances/education, and was pivotal in the creation of the CD-ROM. Caplan (Interview, 1995) said that
writing the Short Version, the only one-person job in the writing process, was a "motivating...exercise:
it forced me to learn all sorts of things I hadn't paid attention to." Caplan's voice throughout the Report
is the predominant voice of persuasion. More than any individual within RCOL, Caplan is responsible for
the tone of the Report, a tone more familiar than formal, a tone that is directly couched in terms of a
direct voice from the commissioners to the public at large, in the sense of "This is what we heard, this
is what we saw, and this is what we think." The tone steers away from the more formal and stilted
language that seems to be the norm in public policy documents and is largely devoid of the specialist
jargon of professional educators. Caplan's voice can be heard in the linkage of the pieces of argument
together and in the general synthesis and interpretation of "what it all means." Caplan's voice is also
omnipresent in the tone of persuasion that permeates the argument: if what the commissioners heard and
saw "sets off some alarm bells" for the state of public education, as Caplan phrased it, the wider invitation
to heed the call of the bells throughout the Report comes from Caplan. His is the consistent voice of
advocacy, of persuasion, of inviting readers to share a sense of urgency about the need for education
reform.

Majone (1989, p. 37) concludes that while advocacy and persuasion are critical to the
advancement of ideas in the social sciences and in policy analysis, studies about them often slight the role
of advocacy and persuasion because they are not seen as part of the tradition of (social) science
reasoning. For his part, Caplan suffered from no illusions of Olympian detachment, and while his sense
of partisanship was tempered by others within RCOL, his zeal for the topic at hand was not.

Argumentation and Political Horse-Trading

Majone (1989) has added to our understanding of the writing process with the concept of public argumentation, and the elements of evidence, argument, and persuasion. But understanding the writing process from the view of public argumentation should not obscure the recognition that the process was also political. In this sense, large pieces of what was written and recommended were there because mutual adjustment and inclusion of commissioner and researcher preferences, rather than consistent fidelity to abstract principle, logic, or cohesion, greased the squeaky wheels of RCOL. Because of this political horse-trading and because the sources and substance of argumentation were plural (commissioners, researchers, readers), key elements in the logic of argumentation (using evidence, argument, and persuasion) were assembled piece-by-piece, and the overall argumentation emerged very late in the process, thanks to the efforts of a few core researchers and Caplan in the final hectic months.

Crisis Pace, Iteration, Logjams, and Cognitive Indigestion

Bégin contrasted RCOL's distinctly untidy process with the "factory type" processing of ideas in her previous commission experience (Observation notes, April 18, 1994). Early in the writing process, RCOLers reflected on untidiness, commitment, and indigestion:

Notes: May 16-Di Cecco: It's not a neat and tidy process, there's a little bit of a panic, the process isn't going to be neat; signing off is just a target date. Otherwise we'll be here till December 24. Murphy: We have to go for it [and] proceed into the unknown. We must make a commitment to the [curriculum chapters]. Caplan and Bégin (a paraphrase): We need more time to digest this stuff.

The writing process was complicated by a crisis pace, logjams, and cognitive indigestion. Soon into the construction of text, a crisis pace was induced by the rapidly approaching deadline, the amount of written material in draft stage, and the large amount of grist yet to be milled. The crisis pace meant that an orderly, sequentially-organized discussion of drafts became impossible, as new drafts and revised drafts were being (re-)cycled to the commissioners, many coming up for discussion in the conference room and by E-mail at the same time. The crisis pace was exacerbated by the inability to reach closure on a large number of drafts because of knowledge constraints or because of the unwillingness to commit by the
commissioners for any number of reasons. Thus the discussion of drafts most often took the form of the "unpacking" of ideas but with little closure. Some drafts would go through a dozen or so perusals in an iterative fashion, with still no agreement on some fundamental issues, including the chapters on accountability, equity, governance, and community education (Researcher A, Interview, 1995). The upshot of untidiness and commissioner stalemate meant that large sections of the Report were still in draft form, and still being debated, in the fall of 1994, a scant number of months before scheduled release. Consequently the pace of work for the four researchers left at RCOL at this juncture was cranked up a few notches more, and despite serious doubts, the finished Report was completed just two weeks after the end of December 1994 deadline set by the government. Commented Researcher G (Interview, 1995) in this regard:

Just because [the commissioners] didn't have a plan or order, they never felt a need to come to a conclusion. They never met a deadline, but in the last few months resolution came at the eleventh hour, after much muddling through ideas.

A logjam of draft chapters also induced a cognitive dissonance, an overload of material to be vetted by commissioners, the result of an imbalance in the amount of wordage to be read and the ability and time to consume it. Commissioners resisted the crisis pace, demanding to ensure that all changes big and small made to drafts were consistent with what they agreed upon, but di Cecco urged them not to flag:

Notes: July 18 - Murphy: Do you expect us to read 100 pages by this afternoon!? Di Cecco: Yes, but you've read most of it before. A brouhaha ensues over the last draft being shredded. The commissioners want the last draft to see if correct changes were made. Murphy: We need to discuss chapter 7 (curriculum) at greater length. We can't sign off for documents we haven't read. He wants to see chapters 1-7 again. Commissioners agree to review chapters 2 and 3 this afternoon, and 6 and 7 tomorrow.

Digestion/indigestion problems commenced early in the writing process and continued until the second week of December 1994. Digestion of material as a problem was also noted by Cairns (1990). Indigestion was promoted by several factors: the wide terrain under study; the burgeoning size of the Report, itself a reflection of researcher unwillingness to stick to original guidelines concerning size, and the inclusion of commissioner preferences; the high productive capacities of the researchers who worked long hours, often seven days a week for extended periods in order to meet the deadline; an erratic
summer (1994) schedule, complicated by commissioner holidays and other commitments for time, meant weeks-long dislocation in commissioner-researcher communications; and finally, indigestion can be traced to information technology: the computer as word processor and the extensive use of E-mail allowed for very quick "turn around" time on the re-drafting of material and feeding it back into the discussion process, introducing less an opportunity for closure than another opportunity for additions and deletions of sentences, paragraphs, and sections, and the insertion of this preference or that pet project. With indigestion came a related problem: simply keeping track of changes in the drafts, watched over in a hawk-like fashion by commissioners, began to dislodge time available for any serious re-thinking of ideas. For commissioner and researcher alike, the writing process led to a collective cognitive, emotional, and physical overload that would not cease until RCOL ultimately folded its tent.

While the conflation of phases did help to structure discussions in a more goal-oriented and concrete direction, this intermingling of the internal deliberation and reporting phases also constrained the nature of the discourse, as the writing framed the issues and structured commissioners and researchers to line up as advocates and critics in response to one individual's interpretation of an issue, or more frequently, a piece of an issue. Discussion of the "bigger picture" became virtually precluded, as the scope of vision narrowed from draft chapters, to sections of chapters, to paragraphs within sections, and to sentences within paragraphs.

Conceptualization, Cohesion, and the Writing Process

Caplan (Interview, 1995) described the writing process as "difficult" and following two different methods, chapters written mainly by one individual and chapters collectively developed. Outside writers were sometimes employed when initial in-house efforts were not working out. He thought the community alliances chapter was a "nightmare".

On the curriculum chapter, we didn't agree on anything so we sent the researcher away to write most of the chapter...The second way was when we had a bunch of topics with an outline and we tried to decide on the main points...and the five commissioners and researchers would figure this out and try to write. We used one or two outside writers but they failed; it was impossible for outsiders to do. On some chapters commissioners took the lead, such as myself on information technology. After the first two drafts, it was left for months then a researcher finished it. Monique did the francophone chapter, then showed it around. The community alliance chapter was a nightmare: we didn't know what to say...I wrote a draft, so did a researcher, and Monique and Dennis combined drafts
[based on a draft written by an "outsider" that was considered too academic in tone]...

Researcher B (Interview, 1995) described a different writing process for each chapter, some with one main author, some with several. Some chapters such as on Catholic and francophone issues were subject to minimal amendment, but others like governance got written by several individuals, each making major changes. This researcher thought that the equity chapter was the most difficult, with a last minute confrontation between commissioners on the issue of public funding to religious schools along the lines suggested by the Shapiro Commission, and on the issue of black focus schools. Researcher B noted that although the governance discussion had clearly identified the main issues, the writing of the chapter led to the complex and protracted involvement of a number of RCOLers:

There was no one process for every chapter. The chapter on francophone constitutional issues was written by Bégin with some input from others, and was changed only slightly thereafter. For the Catholic section, Murphy gave direction [to a researcher] and it also was subject to very little change. The aboriginal chapter was written by [a researcher] with little input from others. The curriculum and teacher education chapters were written largely by two different researchers. The commissioners read a lot and said they wanted things added to the curriculum chapter like the dropout issue and career links. The biggest problem in writing was the chapter on equity issues. The commissioners did much soul searching on religious issues and black focus schools. The governance chapter was not too difficult, as the commissioners knew what kinds of things they wanted to say. But the governance chapter got bounced around to different researchers: [The commissioners] wanted to get the message right, in the right language.

The writing process was more often than not characterized by a high degree of reciprocality, in which pieces of drafts would be written, discussed, and edited, in an iterative fashion, by commissioners and researchers, all working in tandem and with high intensity, in a clash of wills and energy.

Notes: June 30 - Di Cecco says some progress has been made on the writing of recommendations. A researcher is very angry because she was left out of language policy issues. Di Cecco replies that this is a "crazy-making time" and that the researcher should "just hop into it and do it".

November 3/4 - I'm told that Caplan is not happy that pieces have been taken out of the equity chapter. Di Cecco had three researchers rewriting it. Glaze was most upset when some of the black community/anti-racism pieces got amended, and left the conference room in anger. Another researcher took the blame on this one.

November 10 - Caplan and Bégin changed Glaze's piece about accountability in the proposed black focus schools. Neither Caplan nor Bégin support parental decision-making
power at the school level, only advisory input. Caplan is very busy on the "SPV" of the 
report, the short pointed version [soon to be called The Short Version]. Today a 
researcher met with a layout/ graphic designer for the report. Murphy objects to the 
shortening of the chapter on Catholics and insists it be restored as in the last draft.

November 13 - A researcher is pleased that I finished off 12b in her absence and that 
another researcher also finalized the implementation chapter for her. A third researcher 
has restored most of the earlier material including the Catholic piece. It has gone to the 
outside editor except for the francophone piece, written in French by Bégin, which needs 
an English translation.

November 15 - Caplan sent an E-mail saying he wants all references to efficiency dropped 
from the funding chapter, but that references to adequacy and equity may remain. Caplan 
wants no discussion of efficiency in the funding section, and he has edited out all previous 
 attempts to discuss it, leaving researchers perplexed as to his motivation. [The three 
categories of efficiency, adequacy, and equity were based on the writing of Tim Sale, a 
Manitoba scholar on education finance (1993).]

The four engines (alternately called pillars and levers) presented an interesting challenge in the 
writing phase. The concept was promoted by the commissioners as their contribution to the Report, a 
product of what they had heard and read, and of their own judgment. The integration of the 
argumentation of this piece into the rest of the Report, largely written by researchers, was one of the 
greatest challenges faced in the process.

Notes: June 14 - Caplan: There are problems with the coherence of the document 
according to researchers. Caplan asks the commissioners to spend the rest of week 
looking at the entire report. He says this has to be the week to finish the line of argument: 
We may still feel lost at the end of it. Bégin: The research team hasn't been with us for 
some of the discussion on the four pillars. Murphy prefers to use the descriptors of levers 
or engines instead of pillars. Glaze wants to add curriculum focus as a lever, but no other 
commissioners agree, at least on its elevated status as a full lever/engine/pillar.

Bégin queries MET's principles of excellence and equity, and she doesn't see rationale of 
partnerships and accountability. Glaze: Accountability should be a pillar, it's only now just 
being recognized by teachers and administrators.

A researcher: Can we address accountability without addressing choice? Caplan: I don't 
like accountability. I think it's hollow: accountability is who will answer for performance, 
not just testing. Bégin: Engines are resources; accountability is a principle, not a resource; 
excellence, equity, and partnerships are principles not resources. Other commissioners 
seem to concur with Bégin, except for Glaze, and accountability does not make it as an 
engine/pillar/lever.
June 20 - *A researcher* complains, once again, that the four levers seem arbitrary and wants to know where to put them in the argumentation. *Di Cecco* suggests getting the advice of the outside editor.

June 29 - *Commissioners* are not happy with the latest piece on problems heard in hearings and the emergence of the four levers. *Begin* says the four levers didn't emerge from hearings but rather from the commissioners' analysis. *Caplan* seconds his co-chair's point. *Murphy* agrees: Our response is driven by the hearings, research, and our own judgment.

Ensuring Report continuity and cohesion were often left to individual initiative: portfolios were assigned to individuals, not teams, and no director of research was available who could coordinate the multitude of drafts, some nearly completed, some barely conceptualized, and with many drafts somewhere in between these two extremes. As researcher numbers were reduced dramatically by the fall of 1994, the number of chapters or sections assigned to remaining researchers increased, and researchers had little time for checking cross-chapter continuity. Coordination of this process was ad hoc and hit-and-miss, with bits and pieces of several chapters sometimes being discussed in one week. How these chapters related to one another, how the engines related to each other and to the other chapters, and what was the meaning of the entire tableau, only emerged through an iterative scrutiny, once the writing process was well underway.

Notes: April 28 - *Di Cecco*: Once we put pieces together, we have to ask: "What does it mean?" Who's going to do this? *A researcher*: We need to make it coherent. *Another researcher*: It's important to do the analysis among ourselves.

June 17 - *Di Cecco* says that the research team work would do better if we criticized chapters within the team before those drafts got to commissioners, that *Caplan* had empowered us to do this. It is obvious that the coherence of report is a major problem, e.g., one researcher in the governance chapter is making a recommendation to centralize curriculum development but the researcher who is writing the curriculum chapters doesn't know about that connection.

July 28 - *Di Cecco*: The report does not hang together as it is now. The introductory chapters do not present the logic and argumentation of the entire piece. *Di Cecco*: We need to struggle more with the commissioners.

September 6 - *Di Cecco* says *Caplan* is anxious to finish, and the outside editor will do more editing and less rewriting. First three chapters still not finished as edited. The rest of report is still in draft form, some chapters more near closure than others. *A researcher*
says there's still lots more writing to do, and worries about whether we still have time to pay attention to how it all fits together.

Recommendations were usually extracted post factum from chapters, and often involved debate about the appropriate level of detail. In some cases, recommendations were based less on the argumentation of the chapter and more as an afterthought, or inserted as a pet project, by a particular commissioner (Researcher B, Interview, 1995). The somewhat loose connection between analysis/argumentation (the main body of a chapter) and the recommendations that follow suggest that certain recommendations owe much of their origin to the individual preferences of commissioners and researchers; their inclusion emerged through bargaining, negotiation, and in some cases cajoling. That is to say, recommendations are only partially to be construed as "solutions" to "problems" or "issues" identified as part of argumentation; rather they assume a certain autonomy of their own, the product of micropolitics rather than of argumentative logic.

Logic and cohesiveness were also problematic because ultimately the Report was a political document, in which commissioner and researcher preferences vied for front-burner status. This political contest was unrelenting, extinguished only when the Report came back from the printers. Each commissioner had a shopping list, as did each researcher. The sheer size of the Report helped to ensure that a commissioner or researcher could get his or her particular perspective, or pet project, included as long as no commissioner vociferously opposed its inclusion, as Caplan (Interview, 1995) observed:

Some stuff in the Report is tokenist and is there because a commissioner wanted it there. There are dozens of paragraphs and sentences like this. Exhaustion leads you to just give up resisting at a certain stage.

Inclusion of preferences, rather than cohesion and brevity, became the order of the day, and chapters grew accordingly in length. Researcher A (Interview, 1995) described researcher frustrations in trying to accommodate commissioner preferences:

We'd get five different sets of comments from five different commissioners, three of which would be mutually exclusive. We'd get comments like: "Keep this paragraph, it's the best in this section", while another commissioner would demand that we get rid of it. How could we deal with this?

If this give and take had earlier prevented a premature closure to the content of the Report, the demand was growing for greater focus and linkage:
Notes: July 15 - A researcher complains about redundancies in the first five chapter drafts, and another researcher criticizes commissioners who are pumping up the size of the chapters by adding sentences, paragraphs, and pet projects. Di Cecco says maybe the outside editor can help. Issues section and purposes section have to be discussed again and we haven't addressed implementation plan chapter at all.

September 15 - The latest via the grapevine. Governance (now "Power and Influence", Caplan's preference, but it will soon revert to a more generic title), was rewritten by Caplan and a researcher but Glaze still wants a big role for parents on school councils and Caplan doesn't. On the purposes of schools section: Glaze is upset that it doesn't contain a statement of wider responsibilities other than teaching and learning. Technology chapter went well according to a researcher, but he doesn't think it's that good; still, he doesn't have the time to re-do it. Caplan and Begin like this draft of Chapter 11, and today's discussion is mostly on supervisory officers. Caplan seems especially agitated during this discussion. Glaze thinks supervisory officers courses need new rigour, and wants a paid sabbatical year for every educator in system but other commissioners are most sceptical about this idea, and some researchers find it hilarious.

By October 1994, when only four researchers were left at RCOL, much of the Report was in an unfinished state. A few weeks later a varying number of copy editors, proofreaders, and French translators would join them, and the newcomers occupied the spaces left by vacating researchers: they spread out completed drafts on the conference tables for intimate perusal. In the place of a rather intimate organization populated by the same individuals for over a year and a half working and jostling in close confinement, RCOL was transformed into an organization where virtual strangers came in for specific projects. Because of the intensity of the work process and differentiated tasks, virtual strangers some of them would remain, two solitudes defined by the work they did and the language they did it in.

Outside Readers

Four outside readers proved critical to changes in style and content: Bernard Shapiro (the new Principal of McGill University and former Deputy Minister of Ontario's Ministry of Education); Tom Riley (the retiring Director of Education for the Dufferin-Peel RCSSB); Peggy Milton Moss (a former chair of the Toronto Board of Education, a former New Democratic Party subcabinet official in the Rae Government, and soon to be the Executive Director of the Canadian Education Association); and the fourth reader was an unnamed francophone from the University of Ottawa.

The four readers based their comments on a September 1994 draft of the Report which must have
created problems for them: several chapters of Volume 4, particularly on equity issues, were not at this time even completed at a satisfactory first-draft stage. As these draft chapters or sections were finalized, they were forwarded to the readers. One such section, on "Religious, Language, Ethno-cultural and Racial Minorities", was dated October 11, 1994. "Power and Influence" on system organization and governance was not completed at all by this stage, and "Implementation" came with the caveat: "first very rough and incomplete draft". In short, the readers were presented with a document still very much in the development phase, well into the fall of 1994, a couple of months shy of the Report's release date.

Shapiro and Riley, in particular, contributed lengthy and detailed reviews, commenting upon style, tone, substance, and cohesion. Their main criticism of the draft report, aside from substantive inquiries, was that "they couldn't see the forest for the trees" and much more structuring and re-editing was ordered to clarify the writing (Caplan, Interview, 1995). One reader found some of Caplan's editorializing ("tarting up" was Caplan's phrase), to verge on the flippant, dismissive, or sarcastic side. Researchers used the readers' comments to press for a more vigorous approach to in-house editing, and di Cecco agreed. Some commissioners noticed some of these changes and demanded restoration of the original text, which was done amid renewed grumbling from the side of the researchers.

Fighting for Ideas Revisited

As the observation notes show, commissioners, the executive director, and researchers all had their preferences for inclusion and the particular spins they wanted for argumentation, sparking off three-sided confrontation in the waning months of the writing process:

Notes: November 15, 1994 - Caplan contends that the "equity" focus has been lost by splitting up "power and influence" and he wants to beef up the equity parts, but the researcher writing this piece tells him again, most forcefully, that the old sections "don't work" and she refuses to back down. Caplan still wants a "power and control" spin on this section, and the researcher insists that an organizational design approach is more suitable, and that Caplan is trying to subsume too many issues under one heading. This chapter had been taken out of the hands of one researcher and rewritten by Caplan, and then passed on to another researcher, getting input from other researchers along the way.

Di Cecco is trying to get commissioners to back off dismantling the Metro Toronto School Board and to move away from centralizing funding, but the researcher writing this section is getting more figures to bolster her case for this recommendation. The commissioners are not convinced either way is better about Metro and don't seem to have
a deep interest in this matter. Big complaints about the executive director lately from two researchers, with the former literally dictating her agenda to them. Researchers claim that they get the blame when the hawk-eyed commissioners notice unapproved changes. The executive director, I'm told, has strong ideas about an expanded role for MET and the leadership role it should play and wants a researcher to include her comments in the Report. I'm told she favours letting Metro keep its extra funding. The researcher begs off, claiming that if the commissioners did not approve of these views in previous meetings, then including them now would only cause an explosion. This same message was also directed to Glaze, who recently tried to get a researcher to insert some recommendations by telephone without first discussing them with other commissioners.

For their part, some researchers were not shy about deleting passages they found offensive, silly, or unnecessary, without asking for permission from commissioners or other researchers. Especially in the final month or so before the Report was printed, the crisis crunch of the deadline enabled the few remaining researchers, in a "subversive way" as one researcher phrased it, to rid the text of several passages they didn't like, or make other substantive changes, with or without the connivance of the executive director. Researcher F (Interview, 1995) summed up this subversiveness:

Whoever has the draft just before it goes to the printers has power...I didn't always follow instructions on what I should be writing: nodding yes, doing no. I often put stuff back in until it got accepted.

Some things deleted by researchers included some of Caplan's comments that were seen as tinged with sarcasm or flippancy and an example of a sample report card composed by two other researchers that some felt to be full of the woolly language that parents complained about in the hearings.

By mid-December 1994, as the last chapters went out the door to the printers, the three-way process of bargaining and cajoling around the writing process came to an end. The image of the deadline had proved a powerful force in kick-starting the writing process, and now its imminent approach put a sense of closure and a finality to the process that RCOLers were unable to achieve through consensus. Although commissioners and researchers still had many changes they wished to make to this or that chapter at a very late date, time had simply run out, leaving RCOLers with a sense that, under the circumstances, the Report was a reasonable reflection of a work-in-progress, a document that could have been further clarified, modified, or improved. In the following section I explore how commissioners would have changed the Report if each had been the sole author.

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Second Thoughts

I asked each commissioner and researcher how the Report would be different and/or the same, if each had been the sole author. Each offered different perspectives about what he or she thought was missing from the Report or what should have received more emphasis or a different treatment. Their responses give a strong indication that the Report was a document of a political and value compromise for the commissioners in the same sense as it was for educational stakeholders. In other words, the Report was a product of commissioner preferences but not all their preferences, less an artifact of ideational symmetry than of political accommodation. Some ideas were rejected because another commissioner or commissioners voiced strong objections, and some preferences never found their way into the Report because time simply ran out, when the debate on ideas and preferences met an abrupt closure in the winter of 1994.

Glaze (Interview, 1995) would have preferred the Report to be more thorough on governance.

On school boards, I would have had different groups working simultaneously, gathering the data and doing research. I wanted the Report to be more comprehensive, not in length, as it was already too long. I wanted to identify key issues facing educators and make recommendations for future action. On accountability issues I would have been much stronger, much tougher: spelling out the roles, responsibilities, expectations of the system and providing a mechanism for reprisals. I would have dealt with the relationship between MET and school boards from the point of view of accountability. I would have defined much more clearly the role of MET vis-à-vis the system.

Murphy (Interview, 1995) wanted a much stronger vision on educational outcomes, particularly with reference to transcendent or moral dimensions. He would also have preferred a stronger statement on the role of schools in promoting national identity and citizenship.

I wanted more vision. I would have tried to devise a number of categories to which different school systems could situate themselves in terms of vision...I think that not only believing people but an increasing number of secular and agnostic people want to see, in their secularity, a vision that gives some coherence and consistency to what it is that education seeks to accomplish, a coherence and consistency that will translate into living life on economic, political and social levels, as well beyond formal schooling, helping people become members of society...The Report is also marked by a kind of reticent patriotism, a sense of national identity that may be of value to some of us and not necessarily of value to others, so we don't deal with it: that's missing in the Report.

Bégin (Interview, 1995) would have dealt more with the changing role of the teacher in the
context of the information technology revolution.

[Since] Gutenberg invented the printing press nothing had changed much in education...[Now] knowledge is available to anybody anywhere, outside of the school system...For the first time in history the role of teachers has changed fundamentally because they are no longer essential, it’s a major threat. We still need them, but their role has changed completely. Any information or any knowledge that is easily accessible in my house questions the role of teachers. They have to switch to facilitation. We don't say that clearly enough: we say it's changed but we don't prove it...[On the whole] I'm proud of the Report: there are not many crazy things in it, and on the whole it suits me.

Caplan (Interview, 1995) was relieved he was not the sole author and added that internal commissioner politics played a role in what was written about and what was not:

I ended up not interested in the details of francophone and curriculum chapters. I think the quality of the teacher is more important than any curriculum. I'm glad it wasn’t my sole responsibility and I was happy to share responsibility. Some researchers' work and views were more important to me than those of other commissioners and in many cases I deferred to them...The greatest weakness in the Report: we had no data person to look into stats on things like Japanese education and funding...The internal politics of the commission didn't allow that to happen. I remember an ugly evening in Sarnia when I got into a fight with a Quality Education woman when the public system was on strike there...She made all sorts of claims about how many hours kids spend in school in Japan and other things that I think we could have responded to...

Bharti (Interview, 1995) said she wouldn’t have changed much concerning the content of the Report but would have liked to have changed the process:

I wish I had been more part of the process, but I was at school and had part-time status. I wanted to interact more with the research team and work more with students, especially to explain why I wasn't in favour of students being able to hire and fire teachers and to explain some other positions I took.

A central task of politics is the regulation of conflict over the allocation of scarce resources. Several RCOHex thought that the Report met the question of a more equitable distribution of resources in a forthright manner, tackling a topic that was not included in the mandate statement with recommendations that were bound to be perceived as politically unpopular entrenched interests. In this context, Researcher A (Interview, 1995) maintained that:

The four recommendations on education finance (153 to 157) were reflective of the ideology of RCOH: that there were two classes of students in the province, in assessment-rich boards and assessment-poor boards. This ties in with the lens or optic of the Report.
How does this unequal funding impede learning? These recommendations were politically tough and politically unpopular. It's no accident that education finance was left out of the mandate statement and that these recommendations were not responded to by Cooke. RCOL took the funding disparity issue seriously. Though 35 of 40 of the assessment-poor boards are Catholic, it was not a Catholic issue, but rather an issue of equal funding per student in the province.

Researchers C and E (Interviews, 1995), on the other hand, thought that the redistributive recommendations were not tough or thorough enough. Both thought the case for equitable funding could have been made much stronger by detailing the funding and resourcing problems of assessment-poor boards. They also thought, given the daunting fiscal constraints of the times, that the recommendations in general should have been costed and prioritized, as almost all of the recommendations would have entailed additional expenditure in the era of "no new money". If the commissioners believed that no new money was forthcoming (as they indicated in the Report), which recommendations did they consider most vital and how would they be funded (i.e., what recommendations should take priority, and what initiatives could be dropped and what things could wait)? The lack of a cost analysis had political connotations. For example, Researcher C said that because the ECE recommendation obviously entailed large additional expenditures, the failure of an adequate costing, especially in the form of various ECE models with differing organizational and cost implications, weakened the arguments for the proposal, and gave those opposed to the recommendation (mainly in the Conservative Party in Opposition) the opportunity to deride ECE in terms of its obvious cost considerations.

Design Without Order

This dissertation is liberally sprinkled with the observations from Feldman's (1989) study of how a government policy bureaucracy provided information as an input into policy decisions. She referred to this process as "order without design" and used the word "paradox" to describe a process by which bureaucratic analysts systematically produced information that was difficult to use directly in decision-making. She noted that analysts could do little to alter the constraints of the process, but continued to produce papers because analysis is a valued job that might, they hoped, influence policy. In RCOL's case, "design without order" may seem a more appropriate understanding, as one researcher described the overall process to me. Within RCOL, researchers' roles shifted from providing "discussion papers" that
identified issues and synthesized literature, to writing much of the Report, in an untidy and messy process. This contrast underscores some essential differences between an established "government bureaucracy" and a policy-oriented commission. RCOL was not primarily about producing information for decision-making by policy-makers; it was about identifying and interpreting issues, the setting of norms, and the construction of arguments for a wide audience that included policy-makers. RCOL's activities were oriented towards policy problems that were "supernonroutine," i.e., by definition, outside of the "routine" policy process (Cf. Bulmer, 1993, p. 41). As an arm's-length structure, RCOL was also "superbureaucratic": the ebb and flow in the production of the Report were grounded in the context of a loosely-structured commission, not a routinized bureaucracy. These dynamics within RCOL pulled researchers away from an understanding of their roles as policy advisors and analysts and researchers and towards the conceptualization of their work as constructors of arguments/writers and as advocates/critics of values, ideas, and concepts, and when the occasion called for it, micropoliticians.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In Chapter 5, I have discussed internal deliberations (expert, researcher, and commissioner meetings) as well as the writing process, all of which occupied RCOLers for 1994. In Chapter 6, I examine and analyze the role that values played in internal deliberations and in the writing process from several different angles.
CHAPTER 6 - THE CONSTRUCTION OF EDUCATIONAL VALUES AND PHILOSOPHY

Running like a river through much of my discussion on knowledge construction is the idea that RCOLers were also focussed on the construction of a political philosophy of education. In addition to being adjudicators of fact and opinion, commissioners were also called on to adjudicate and evaluate, affirm or reject, an array of public values and ideas. Nor were RCOLers simply "processing" the exogenously-defined values of the "out there" environment: internal discussions and the writing of the Report were important mechanisms by which commissioners and researchers would stake out their own value-based and pragmatic preferences. The Report is a product of exogenous and endogenous values; its evidence, argument, and persuasion are built on an understanding of, and an appeal to, an evolving set of attitudes, feelings, and beliefs about a new vision, or public philosophy, for public education.

This understanding of the construction of a public philosophy reflects the "cultural theory" of Wildavsky (1987), that "preferences in regard to political objects are not external to political life; on the contrary, they constitute the very internal essence, the quintessence of politics: the construction and reconstruction of our lives together" (p. 5). Stone (1988) also used the image of core values being "continuously constructed" through debate and deliberation. In Chapter 3 I introduced various conceptions of public values and ideology in the discussion of RCOL's composition and of the two biases, progressive and inside/outside. In this part of the dissertation, I further relate how core values were constructed during the internal deliberations and the writing process, with a particular focus on four debates about governance, the purposes of schooling, secondary school issues, and public choice.

VALUES AND IDEAS WITHIN THE COMMISSION: A PUBLIC ARGUMENTATION AND EQUIVOCAILITY MODEL

One approach in studying the role of ideas and values in public policy is to present a hierarchy of values and ideas, with higher levels interconnected with, and structuring the content of, lower ones (Mawhinney, 1993). For example, two often-cited Canadian works on public policy utilize this framework. Doern and Phidd's hierarchy (1983) encompasses ideologies, core ideas, and policy objectives. Pal's (1992) normative scale begins with basic assumptions about human behaviour and related
matters, continues with policy goals, and ends with policy specific frameworks or theories.

The hierarchical approach is useful in that it provides a structure to investigate values and ideas. For their scrutiny within RCOL, however, this approach has some major limitations. Probably the most salient limitation is that within RCOL little in the way of hierarchy was to be found in terms of the ways the process unfolded. For sure, some aspects of the hierarchical model may be attributed ex post or excavated by inference, but the process itself did not commence with any conception of an ordering of ideas or values.

In substantive ways, a hierarchical model approach conforms closely with the rational decision-making model, and with the classical understanding of policy analysis, or some variant of it. In the rational/classical model, goals are specified at the beginning, options explored, and decisions made based on which option best serves the principle of "maximizing" or "satisficing" the intended goals. In RCOL's case, a public argumentation model along the lines suggested by Majone (1989), discussed earlier in the context of the writing process, is one half of the equation in trying to understand how values and preferences evolved within RCOL: many value preferences were discovered as the knowledge base was being constructed. Valuation in policy-oriented commissions is an empty exercise unless it is underpinned by a thorough understanding of substantive issues, and within RCOL this required much time, cognition, and interaction. Ideas, and the values that were attached to them, needed to be fleshed out within RCOL through the iterative, intertwined, and loosely-structured spirals of internal debate and of the writing process.

The public argumentation model within RCOL also made a hierarchical approach in valuation highly problematic because politics does not respect the neatness of ideational symmetry. Ideas and values did form some recognizable patterns in the Report, but bits of analysis and some recommendations are there because of the exercise of power and considerations of pragmatism. If an individual commissioner or researcher wanted ideas, pet projects, and recommendations included, and no one else strongly objected, then they usually would be featured. This featuring could be reached in a collective fashion in meetings or E-mail, or take the form of intensive one-on-one politicking with an air of surreptitiousness to it. That is to say, pieces of the puzzle did not necessarily fit any externalized, manifest hierarchy, but were sometimes the product of an often arbitrary, highly ad-hoc contest of wills. Thus, as I discuss below, the notions of political accommodation and equivocality are also important to understand how the RCOL
process worked.

The politics of education is a particular domain of politics in general and RCOL was a political and politicized instrument: the internal deliberations and writing processes of RCOL were directed by only a faint blueprint structured by core principles to guide them. This situation has its genesis in the commissioners' decision to use the foundational mandate only as a stepping stone, and to create their own collective and individual agendas articulated through what Researcher E (Interview, 1995) described as non-stop "emergent planning."

Political Accommodation and Equivocality

Values or "core ideas" like equity, excellence, and efficiency are important pieces of the ideational structure of policy (Mahwinney, 1993; Townsend, 1988). For the purposes of this study, the flow of values and ideas in the public hearings was more accessible because presenters often couched their arguments in explicit appeals to public values to justify their stances; and if this was not done explicitly, the core ideas or values underlying their arguments could without much effort be constructed. This was part of my role as analyzer of stakeholder presentations, the "participant" part of my dual role within RCOL. Once the internal deliberations process started, however, the excavation of values and ideas within RCOL became more difficult for a number of related reasons. The first reason ties in with the non-hierarchical argument I presented above: at the outset of internal deliberations, no clarification of values was available to inform the deliberations. While various researchers ascribed various motivations to this situation, what is clear is that most commissioners were simply not comfortable with this type of activity: the few occasions when such discussions were undertaken, they only served to dampen momentum, not clarify matters. Subsequent discussions of a less ambitious nature also did little in the way of what is called value clarification. Without any in-house generated agreement about what certain core ideas meant and how they should be used, individual commissioners were free to provide their own understandings of these ideas and imbue them with whatever meanings they wished. For example, as I explore below, Caplan's understanding of accountability was not the same as Glaze's, and Murphy's perception of community was wider than that of his colleagues.

Some values had distinct, potentially conflictive meanings for some commissioners that were not recognized by other commissioners. Hence the excellence/equity debate was distinguished by one set of
commissioners who saw them as different values that should be dealt with separately, the other set of commissioners conflated the two notions to create a compound value. Thus values, and their usage within RCOL, can be described as having multiple meanings that were constructed in specific debates, meanings that were subjectively defined on an individual basis but collectively used by different groupings of commissioners as they faced off on contested issues.

A multiplicity of meanings found their way, one way or another, into the Report because of political brokering. Within RCOL, conflicting values might have been resolved on occasion through the use of evidence, argument, and persuasion, but were more often negotiated in a political and inclusive fashion, unless a challenge was so strong as to stop an idea or proposal dead in its tracks. The Report is a product of mutual adjustment because the complexity of the argumentation, and its large volume, allowed for the nesting of all sorts of values and ideas, some explored at length and some the equivalent of "throw-away lines." Without a strong ideational template to structure discussions into an orderly sequence of tasks, moreover, a protracted give-and-take was the main mechanism by which ideas could be brought forward and closure brought to the proceedings. Give and take in the form of mutual adjustment was also the main coordinating mechanism that fitted the ad hoc nature of RCOL, and political harmonizing would thus piggy-back on mutual adjustment throughout the process.

For a further clarification of the meaning of this political adjusting of values, I return to Feldman (1989, p.19) who notes two different ways by which meaning is constructed within organizations:

March et al. claim to "remain in the tradition of viewing organizational participants as problem solvers and decision makers" (March and Olsen, 1976, p.21). However, they propose a way of viewing organizations that gives primary importance to the question of "how... individuals and organizations make sense of their experience and modify behavior in terms of their interpretations of events" (p.56). Weick leans in the opposite direction and, at times, seems to deny any importance to problem solving. He presents organizations as means of managing equivocality. He says that "we are concerned with ways in which organizations make sense out of the world and of the fact that they spend the majority of the time superimposing a variety of meanings on the world" (Weick, 1979, p.175)...March et al. say ambiguity implies a lack of clarity in meaning; Weick's equivocality implies that more than one meaning is given.

In this sense, RCOL could not be described as an exercise in a March et al. "sense making," for that implies some sort of collective coming together on agreed understandings is an uppermost task in the organization. The handling of values within RCOL is more in keeping with Weick's notion of
"equivocality," the superimposing of multiple meanings for the same values, less sense-making and more an image of layers of meanings imposed upon one another. Equivocality was a natural by-product of political adjustment, reflected when each commissioner invested core ideas with their own definitions and sought to have them included in the Report. Equivocality was also a response to several of the core dilemmas of public education, for which the commissioners favoured balance and adjustment over mutually-exclusive constructs. On the other hand, as I noted earlier, constitutionally-grounded Roman Catholic and francophone issues were considerably less characterized by notions of ambiguity and equivocality, and instead were defined by values that were unambiguous and unequivocal in their meaning and intent: autonomy and sustenance of the Roman Catholic separate school component and the creation of an autonomous francophone component of the publicly-funded education system.

Slogans and Threats

A third level of the hierarchical approach is the policy specific or paradigmatic level. Pal (1992) labels this level of normative content "the policy specific" while Doern and Phidd (1983) refer to the specific objectives and purposes that may be "debated or in dispute within a policy field" (p. 58). Objectives are closely related to a policy paradigm that provides a series of principles or assumptions which guide action and suggest solutions within a given policy field.

In the American educational context efficiency, equity, quality, and choice are often clustered into four policy-specific domains of program, finance, organization, and governance and these can be arrayed on the basis of value reinforcement/opposition in each of the domains (Marshall, Mitchell & Wirt, 1989). RCOL's mandate of inquiry reflected a similar breadth of policy domains. The problem with the model of Marshall et al. is that it situates the reinforcement or opposition of core values like quality and efficiency at a very high level of abstraction. From the experience of reaction to RCOL's report by various stakeholder groups, the acid test of value reinforcement/opposition lay not in academically-conjured models but rather in how specific values were manifested in recommendations that were perceived as supporting, or undermining, the interests of specific stakeholders. In other words, values in the form of argumentation and specific recommendations need to be unpacked, manifested, and reacted to, not just on a cognitive basis but also on a political basis, before one can make an authoritative judgment as to notions of value reinforcement or opposition. Until the "rubber hits the road" in a political process of
stakeholder reaction, values-in-the-abstract such as equity and efficiency remain ill-defined slogans that can be embraced by all because their specific meaning and content do not threaten any interests (Popkewitz, 1980). Once this process takes place, slogans can quickly be interpreted as unequivocal threats. Mawhinney (1993), in her study of Ontario educational politics, came to a similar conclusion about how the meaning of core ideas is grounded in different perceptions of players as to what the impacts of those ideas might entail: "Core ideas embodied in a policy change may only become clear as those affected begin to see the practical impact the change will have on their lives. Ideas do not exist in pristine form in the content of a policy pronouncement..." (p. 327).

To give a concrete example of values as slogans, one should consider the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation's (OSSTF) claim, prominently displayed in their extensive brief to RCOL (1993), that their commitment to public education was based on four principles of universality, accessibility, accountability, and excellence. In reaction to specific RCOL recommendations that also made some claim on these principles, OSSTF objected most vigorously. If universality meant equal funding for all students in the publicly-funded system regardless of which component, OSSTF was against it. If accessibility meant an equal level of resourcing at all publicly-funded schools in the province, OSSTF was against it. If accountability meant a College of Teachers and an Office of Accountability and Assessment, OSSTF was against it. If excellence meant eliminating Grade 13 (consistent with every other province) and investing more public funds in early childhood education, OSSTF was against it (OSSTF, 1995). What OSSTF was for was an interpretation of those four principles that its executive did not perceive as threatening the professional discretion and livelihoods of its members and the organizational imperatives of this particular teacher federation. In other words, as a slogan, the four principles were based on an appeal to commonly-held democratic values; in practice, however, the interpretation of these values by RCOL and by OSSTF only invited conflict of a manifested value and interest-based variety.

Equivocality, Heterogeneity, and Political Culture

Manzer (1994) contrasted the cluster of ideas or paradigms across a similar range of Canadian educational domains as Marshall et al. (1989), but his treatment of them was different. He painstakingly detailed the origin and evolution of clusters of ideas in the political philosophies of a uniquely Canadian context, a robust example of intellectual ideology as defined above by Billig et al. (1988). Ethical liberal
educational ideas and values stress individual self-development, distributive justice, educational pluralism, social integration, and cultural identity. The technological liberal approach tends to cluster effectiveness, efficiency, excellence, competition, and accountability. In the technological liberal perspective, education as a tool in helping Canada to stay competitive in the global political economy is seen as the biggest challenge facing state education. A third educational ideology is the radical conservative paradigm that clusters the "pursuit of truth, pursuit of excellence, individual responsibility, culture and community and educational breadth" (Holmes, 1980, p. 407). These three contrasting visions of the purpose of schooling, as educational paradigms, would impact in qualitatively different ways on the policy specific domains of program, finance, organization, and governance.

With a superimposing of diverse and sometimes conflicting values as a practice of equivocality, and value and idea preferences achieved through negotiation and wilful disposition, it stands to reason that within RCOL paradigm-shaping policy specifics or policy objectives were not constructed out of "whole-cloth" and do not reflect a precise, ideologically-symmetrical perception of education. Manzer's clusters (1994) were deliberate pure-type constructions that detail the logic of an idea, but he carefully documented that when whole-cloth conceptions meet political, policy, and economic contexts and above all people, their interaction patches together a quilt-work of conflicting public values and ideas. Mahwhinney (1993) also warned against observers taking a "check-list" approach, steeped in the symmetry of intellectual ideology, to understand and explain how values and core ideas emerge from the policy process. The notion of a compact and tidy paradigm is also undermined by the content of the Report: a complex set of arguments interspersed through 600 pages does not lend itself easily to a pure-type reductionism. Looked at from another angle, RCOLers were pulled to a heterogeneous construction of ideas as they sought to adjust ideas and values from a wealth of sources: intellectual ideology, lived ideology, endogenously- and exogenously-defined values and ideas, popular and scholarly literature, views of experts and outside readers, the media, dilemmatic aspects of public education, constitutionally-defined rights, the impact of past policies, contextual elements such as technological change, and the spoken and written words of powerful and not-so-powerful educational stakeholders.

Manzer's critique (1996), of Martell's (1996) radical socialist condemnation of RCOL's recommendations, was cognizant that the centrifugal and dilemmatic pulls of values, ideas, and interests on RCOL demanded both a political and a democratic accommodation:
...In Martell's interpretation of the Social Contract and the Royal Commission on Learning, distinctive assumptions and arguments of conservatives, liberals, and social democrats are collapsed into an omnibus "neo-conservative juggernaut."

The real world of educational politics in Ontario is much more ideologically complex than Martell portrays it. The creation of a new public philosophy for education in Ontario depends on a public dialogue in which there is openness to thought and argument across the spectrum of educational ideologies. Not only should the voice of radical democracy be heard in this public debate, but the democratic left also must be open to the ideas and arguments put from diverse ideological positions to their right. (p.4)

In such a public forum as RCOL, different voices were heard and, in a political fashion, encapsulated. Manzer's viewpoint on the complicated nature of Canadian educational politics and the need for political brokering is supported by studies on the nature of Canadian political culture, a political culture that is defined by compromises. Canadian political culture can be grouped into broad categories of co-operation and conflict (Bell, 1984) that operate on several strands from the national level to regionally-based (Jackson and Jackson, 1986). Townsend (1988) explored the political culture of conflict/compromise in the political talk of provincial educational policy actors including those in Ontario. This understanding of political culture emphasizes that broad political ideologies such as liberalism, conservatism, and socialism, and whole-cloth paradigms that are associated with them, are insufficient to explain the range of political behaviour in Canada and the complexity of the policy process. The discussion and development of ideas and values within RCOL would generate prodigious quantities of both conflict and compromise.

VALUE DEFINITION, AMBIGUITY, AND CONFLICT WITHIN RCOL

Value definition within RCOL was highly-individualized, with each commissioner investing his or her own meanings into values and ideas, as they proceeded through the process within a collective lexicon constructed in-house. As Bharti (Interview, 1995) declared: "I found this discussion frustrating because I did not know all the meanings and we had different definitions for each value." Researcher G (Interview, 1995) said that particular values had different emphases and champions within RCOL particularly in the relationship of excellence and equity, that efficiency was least valued by commissioners, and that choice created the greatest conflict. Glaze (Interview, 1995) maintained that her championship of accountability was not generally supported within the Commission. Researcher G (Interview, 1995)
noted that several values raised in the hearings had ambiguous meanings that had to be sorted out in the internal deliberation phase, with varying degrees of success:

From the hearings there was an ambiguity around what quality means: whether it means learning a few basic things thoroughly, or whether it means learning to think complexly. Caplan favoured the latter definition with his "literacies" idea. Accountability was not such a problem to sort out. On community, the issue of trustees versus parent councils comes out: which was the community that most deserved to be heard in the school and how should they be represented? On equity, especially the black focus discussion, there was much ambiguity: is it giving the black students greater opportunity or segregating them in some unacceptable way? Is it equality or unfair privileges?

This observation also reveals that the relationship of values was also intricate and interconnected, implying that some fundamental decisions had to be made about which definitions, or what combinations of them, would appear in the Report.

Researcher G (Interview, 1995) also noted that some values like equity have multiple meanings because almost all stakeholders made some claim that could fit under its generous umbrella, and equity issues were consequently much more difficult to write about than more "discrete" issues like accountability. Speaking in an anthropomorphic mode, this researcher exclaimed that as an idea equity was a force to be reckoned with: "Equity haunted and pursued [the commissioners] from the beginning, and in the end, they could never figure out how to deal with it, with much arguing, and stuff had to be re-written again and again."

As a value or core idea, equity was a multi-compound construction. Equity concerns covered the widest scope of any value: funding issues, questions of inclusion and access, religious minorities, language, ethno-cultural, racial minorities, and the disadvantaged. Roman Catholics, francophone, and aboriginal issues were subsumed in the Report (Vol.4) under the title of "Constitutional Issues" but their presenters in the hearings generally based their arguments on equity grounds, that fairness and social justice required a redistribution of resources in their favour.

Equity is a controversial and slippery value because at the heart of it lies a complex redistributive calculus "of how the sides envision the distribution of whatever is at issue" (Stone, 1988, p. 30), inviting conflict over the classical question of policy analysis: "Who gets what, when and how" (Lasswell, 1951)? Despite having a universal appeal to fairness and an omnibus scope that can fit almost every claim under its mantel, equity once unpacked invites group-based conflict because through redistribution of resources,
it takes from one bloc to give to the other (Stone, 1988). One bloc's equity, in this perspective, is another bloc's inequity; one bloc’s conception of equity is another bloc’s perception of discrimination.

The following example illustrates how the flag of equity waved over the camps of both friend and foe, much in the same vein as the four principles that both RCOL and OSSTF laid claim to. In support of equity, RCOL proposed a new funding system based on pupil enrollment for public and separate school boards, and proposed pooling taxes on both residential and industrial-commercial property, putting a cap on local expenditures of 10 per cent above provincially-recognized expenditures, and pooling revenues that previously were directed to the public component because of the default mechanism. This recommendation was made for the express purpose of ameliorating the imbalance in tax-based revenues that hit hardest at the Roman Catholic and francophone systems, and rural and smaller boards. The status quo in taxation had favoured the big-city public boards that were "assessment rich" in RCOL's words, particularly in Metropolitan Toronto, and it was the representatives of those boards and trustee and teacher associations who were the first to pounce upon the recommendation as a "tax grab" that would undermine the funding of equity-related initiatives in urban schools. Martell (1996) characterized this recommendation as an assault upon the public system’s poor and working class students, largely urban-based.

Excellence and equity, Paquette (1995) noted, are the perennial and central ideals of public education, but the present context of "shrinking government resources and strong accountability demands" has refocused attention over their "conflict and complementarity" (p. 27). Consequently, the juxtaposition of excellence and equity in public policy is increasingly controversial. In this debate, the definition of excellence has increasingly taken on the meaning of excellence-for-competitiveness, that is, producing an elite cadre of students with the requisite knowledge and skills to enter into, and successfully compete in, an export-based, globally-integrated economy in the post-modern information age. Paquette (1995, p. 28) argued that while the diverse needs of the Canadian student population still ensure that equity receives prominent mention in official policy studies, "whether it be resource equity, or equality of access, treatment, or results," this attention is increasingly "symbolic" rather than substantive, with the result that "the excellence agenda has, of late, greatly eclipsed the equity agenda." Many presenters during the public hearings, however, insisted that in Ontario of late the equity agenda was eclipsing the excellence agenda. Typical of this position were the views of Len Budden, a Director of Education in a
public school board, who claimed that the NDP government's legislative agenda contained many examples of "equity driving the policy process at the expense of excellence". This agenda was purported to include special education policies that favoured integration regardless of impacts on classrooms, employment equity policies that made ethnicity and gender considerations key requisites for Ministry appointments, and the motivation behind the Transition Years initiative that destreamed grade nine, a move explicitly based on ethno-cultural considerations rather than on academic excellence considerations (Peterborough Board of Education, 1993).

Quality/excellence was subject to different definitions in the hearings process, and which definition one chooses would have different implications for how one designs curriculum and assessment, as well as for school organization. Researcher C (Interview, 1995) suggested that three different definitions were heard: 1) quality can be defined as the percentage of elite students who do very well; 2) the achievement level of a certain percentage of students, e.g., 80 per cent graduated from secondary school; and 3) the outcomes of groups in wider society that are equal or near equal, i.e., for students from various ethno-communities compared with dominant culture rates, or for boys and girls, or for students from large, urban, and small, rural schools, and so forth. This researcher observed that not much examination of these three definitions was done in RCOL after the hearings, hampered somewhat by the lack of hard data, especially for the third category, data that could have informed the commissioners about where particular problems with quality/excellence were situated.

Caplan and Glaze were steadfast in their stand that no conflict existed between the values of excellence/quality and equity, a view that supports the third definition cited above. Caplan (Orbit, p.4) maintained that excellence and equity issues, as seen within RCOL, were not opposing issues, but rather two sides of the same coin: "[W]hether we were focussing on issues of equity or looking at the mainstream of the education system, time after time we were coming up with the same recommendations. Even though many of these seemed directed at the least advantaged, they in fact will help all students." This conception of the excellence-equity debate essentially conflates the two values into a compound value. Murphy, Bégin, and Bharti, while sympathetic to this position, generally emphasized that secondary schooling of necessity prepared students for different destinations, and by inference they articulated support for what Glaze and Caplan would consider a more elitist definition of quality/excellence.

Although efficiency is considered to rank in the core of public education values in both Canada
and the United States (Mawhinney, 1993), it was not a major consideration in RCOL discussions. Efficiency, in the words of Stone (1988, p. 49), means the "ratio between input and output, efforts, and results, expenditure and income, or cost and resulting benefit." Researcher B (Interview, 1995) surmised that efficiency got short shrift because the commissioners might have thought that by elevating it to a key value, they would be undermining their commitment to equity. This understanding of efficiency as a key public value was particularly well represented in the hearings in the presentations of taxpayer groups, chambers of commerce, and education reform groups, groups that did not fare well because of the progressive bias dominant within the Commission. Minister Cooke's amalgamation agenda was based on a notion of improving the efficiency of the system, but the commissioners could not find hard evidence that any pain taken in this direction would be worth the gain. The inattention to efficiency in the Report in general is also evident in the lack of focus by commissioners on the potential cost of their recommendations.

Murphy (Interview, 1995) contended that the value of community took the longest to conceptualize:

All the other engines had sort of crystallized in the mind of the commissioners before the question of community education finally crystallized in the minds of all. I think it took more time to deal with it because it was also the most difficult recommendation, and for me, the most important recommendation.

Different conceptualizations of what community meant were never resolved within RCOL, and the recommendation for community alliances was supported by commissioners who had their own different understandings of the idea, according to Researcher F (Interview, 1995):

Some commissioners thought it was the community in the school; some saw it as the community not getting its fair share; some saw it as the community around the school; some saw it building community or linking the school as the centre or as a strong player in the body politic...There never seemed to be a conceptual framework, [and the outside contributor to the chapter] came in too late to clarify matters. The debate meandered all over the place.

Researcher C (Interview, 1995) said that Caplan did not want to see the notion of community tied to the governance issue, but that Murphy did; Caplan was interested in how community institutions account for their contribution to the child, as in, "It takes a whole village to educate a child." Murphy saw the community recommendation as a more inclusive type of school council, influenced by the idea of the role
of the local Catholic community in education. For Murphy, the value of community was an in-house generated concept developed mainly in response to what commissioners saw as an overburdening of schools with non-educative, but necessary tasks related to the general well-being of students. Not surprisingly, critics such as Levin (1995) have commented on the vagueness of RCOL's mandate and terms of reference for the school councils, a key community-education recommendation.

Like equity, the meaning and intent of the recommendation for "community education," the first engine, lay in the eyes and value orientation of the beholder. Manzer (1996), for example, saw RCOL's recommendation for school councils as compatible with the assumptions about local democracy that reflect the "ethical liberal" philosophy of education, of which he is a champion:

...By strengthening the institutions of local democracy at the level of schools, as opposed to school boards, effective participation of parents (and students) in educational decision-making can be combined with the professional competence of teachers. Thus a proper balance can be achieved between the private interests of families and the public interest of the liberal democratic state (p.24).

Delhi (1995, p. 19), from what can only be construed as a radical socialist perspective, portrayed the recommendations around community education as both anti-democratic and anti-equity, and a "significant setback compared to policies and practices already implemented in some boards and schools." Rather than empowering parents, community groups, and teachers, she insisted that the recommendation "empowers" a variety of activities: MET through curriculum and standard setting, principals through discretionary budgets, and "within the guise of community-school councils, partnerships, accountability, and community education, private corporations and middle-class parents will be provided with wider avenues to influence schooling." In the internal debate on governance below, I note a similar scepticism from Caplan about what groups would have easier access to the councils (the advantaged) and what interests would most likely dominate the process, a scepticism shared by Pearl (1995) and Levin (1995). It was precisely this scepticism that motivated Caplan to not support the position of Murphy and Glaze to give such councils actual decision-making power. On the other hand, Dehli (1995), citing the experience of the Toronto Board of Education in this direction, supported the notion of a socially-activist local council with decision-making powers, one that would exclude business and wider interests, but include and empower teachers and parents, particularly "working class and minority parents" and those committed to an agenda to counter what she describes as systemic "classism, racism, and sexism" (p.21).
Murphy (Interview, 1995) said that two conflicting voices were heard on accountability in the form of centralized assessment, and that the commissioners strove for the middle of the road on this issue:

One voice, mainly from teacher federations, said: "Oh, you're trying to hold people accountable by evaluation and assessment, but there are a million dangers inherent in testing and evaluation..." We also heard from the general public: "In every other area of our society, people are held accountable for the fulfilment of the purposes of the organization..."

We [the commissioners] saw assessment and evaluation as instruments to study the strengths and weaknesses of the system, and their primary purpose is not to categorize, but to let students, teachers, and parents know how kids are doing.

Murphy's definition of accountability squares with the notion put forward by Earl (1995) that accountability, "the watchword of the 1990s" (p. 61), is defined by a relationship between responsibility (legal or moral) and entitlement, and the medium of accountability is quality information that answers the different questions posed by different groups of decision-makers, implementors, citizens, and stakeholders.

Researcher C (Interview, 1995) thought that accountability, despite its being a "discrete" issue, was neither dealt with in a logical manner nor wholeheartedly embraced by the commissioners, leading to a weak conceptualization in the Report. "Accountability was identified as a key issue in the mandate, but was dealt with in a very confused, and lukewarm fashion. [The researcher initially working on this piece] got jerked around a lot." Researcher F (Interview, 1995) saw the discussion of accountability as a drawn-out affair, partially because of lack of collective commitment among the commissioners to an idea that was so strongly heard in the public hearings:

The co-chairs did not see it as important, but the chapter [on accountability] came out better than the one on community. The commissioners were stuck in another decade: they had to deal with [accountability] reluctantly because the public [in the hearings] saw it as central, as [it] had been marginalized.

On accountability, Researcher B (Interview, 1995) noted that Caplan's experience with his son in school "gave him a reality check," and motivated him to think about accountability and assessment, two areas he was reluctant to address; on a number of occasions within RCOL he had dismissed accountability as "hollow" and he perceived hard-edged centralized assessment mechanisms as an unwanted hobby-horse of educational reform groups. Murphy and Glaze were the strongest supporters of increasing the
accountability of local schools to parents but Caplan, as I show below, was highly sceptical about "giving teeth" to local school advisory councils.

Murphy's as well as Earl's (1995) understandings of assessment and accountability reflect the current trend in recent official policy studies to support a wide definition of accountability across Canada that to some extent overrides ideological differences, but as Manzer (1994) notes, this convergence of policy stances is strongly influenced by the concerns of technological liberalism. Several issues raised in official policy documents that relate to accountability are considered noteworthy by Manzer (1994, pp. 236-237): 1) describing and measuring the results of educational policies are better indicators than input or process variables; 2) public accountability demands a clear demarcation of roles between provincial and local authorities; 3) management should be devolved to school boards, schools, and school councils, but their accountability to the centre should be a key feature; and 4) the policy community should be "extended beyond professional educational interests to incorporate important societal interests, especially organized business and labour."

RCOL made recommendations that were consistent with all four of these aspects of accountability, including: an emphasis on the assessment of educational outcomes to be monitored by a new Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability; a recentralization of curriculum development and standards; the definition of roles and responsibilities of each level of the system; and the establishment of school councils whose membership was wider than the notion of parent councils.

Liz Barkley (OSSTF, 1995, pp. 6-7), speaking as president of the OSSTF, decried this trend in accountability as interpreted by RCOL. Reflecting Delhi's perspective (1995), she argued that the envisaged school councils would "diminish the growing strength of the parent-educator alliance by inserting others whose interests may not focus on the student." Centralizing curriculum development was wrong because it would "move the whole process of curriculum development and testing one step up on the bureaucratic ladder while minimizing teacher involvement," and the proposed Office of Assessment would usurp functions that teachers consider their prerogative. The College of Teachers recommendation, Barkley insisted, was "...entirely unnecessary. All of the [proposed] current functions...are already done by the Ministry, [The Ontario Teachers' Federation] and the affiliates." In Manzer's framework (1994), Barkley's lament focuses both on the advent of a notion of accountability that defines the education policy process in terms of a centralized "tutelage" and the demise of a notion that defines the policy process in
terms of "policy interdependence," a key "ethical liberal" concept (p. 268).

While equity, excellence/quality, accountability, and community were frequently cited by RCOLers as values or core ideas that floated in and out of discussions, no respondent mentioned security, a core idea of the Canadian policy space that Pal (1992, p. 215) defined as a "primary human and social need." The political task of the Commission regarding interest groups was twofold: to promote compromise and educational reform in a way that did not unduly threaten the security needs of any major stakeholder. To accomplish this goal required the commissioners, in the words of Caplan, to be both politically "sensitive" and "acute," to ensure that no major stakeholders would be so affronted by certain recommendations that they would mobilize against the Report. In this endeavour RCOL was largely successful: only OSSTF tried to launch an all-out offensive against major accountability and funding-related recommendations, but their zest was not shared by either teacher organizations or trustee associations. Compromise in this context did not mean getting groups to agree to a commissioner-brokered meeting of the minds as in the Taman Commission (Mahwinney, 1993), but rather ensuring that all the vocal and organized interests would get a portion of their demands met, but not everything they had hoped for, including what Caplan termed "Polyannaish" teacher organizations, "hysterical" Quality Education Reform groups, those "propagandists for complacency" public school trustees, and "decent, loving parents." None of this mostly pejorative language to describe stakeholders was spoken by commissioners in the hearings, and the Report itself is free from such attributions. The co-chair's language points to a central paradox about insider/outsider bias. While it was obviously a factor in describing the degree of commissioner sympathy for interest groups, ultimately the political need to keep important players onside to support a complex plan for reform meant that the commissioners needed to take the notion of security of stakeholders seriously and to build upon it.

The ubiquitous calls by presenters in hearings, as well as growing media attention, would also suggest that security as a value in the educational system was becoming more prominent in terms of its public profile. The need to curb what was perceived as a rising trend in school violence might have required some response from commissioners, but none of them except for Glaze showed much interest in addressing it, and only passing reference to it is made in the Report, to the effect that school violence was being addressed by school boards and so RCOL did not need to respond. But this same logic could have been applied to a host of issues that RCOLers did choose to respond to; after all, one might ask,
what issues are not in school boards’ jurisdictions? In meetings, Caplan in particular on a number of occasions refused to take the discussion of school violence seriously, and so the issue was ignored. Perhaps the politically left-of-centre orientation of the commissioners made it difficult for some of them to deal with an issue that could be perceived as part of a conservative "law-and-order" agenda, and an issue that would detract from the positive "spin" on students that commissioners were bent on detailing, a treatment that is implicitly related to another value, liberty. Also not mentioned by commissioners and researchers as a value of central concern to internal debates is the notion of liberty, the degree of choice and freedom accorded to an individual. Closely related to the idea of liberty is the notion of harm, that the degree of individual liberty should be constrained if the individual's actions harm others (Doern & Phidd, 1983). Although not explicitly mentioned in the Report, the idea of liberty was important in several internal debates. In the context of accountability, the notion of liberty is implicit in the idea of recognizing the democratic, participatory rights of parents and students, that is, recognition of their individual rights and responsibilities juxtaposed with those of societal institutions. Liberty is also implicitly invoked in the largely Caplan-penned section of the Report (Vol.1, pp. 58-60) that criticizes how the "hidden curriculum" of present-day schooling rewards "submissiveness" and the corollary that the school system is "hierarchical" and "authoritarian." Liberty was also a central concern in the secondary school debate about the degree of discretion allowed to students to choose their own courses, and ultimately, their own destinations.

The Constitution, Ambiguity, Constraint, And The Provincial Zone of Action

Researcher G (Interview, 1995) identified the Constitution as a major source of ambiguity about the role of language, religion, and culture, and as a constraint within RCOL:

The Canadian constitution is a source of enormous ambiguity and confusion. Language, religion, and culture are important categories in conferring rights, but were these frozen in time, and restricted to the dominant groups of 1867?

Within RCOL, this constitutionally-tinged ambiguity was the subtext of the public choice debate that I discuss below, in which religion, culture, and ethnicity all played a role.

Within RCOL, the Constitution Act, 1982, section 93, which guaranteed rights to denominational schooling in Ontario, was also a powerful and unambiguous constraint in checking the preferences of
some commissioners for a fully-secularized publicly-funded education system. Researcher B (Interview, 1995) thought that the constitutional guarantees for Roman Catholic schools were a major deterrent to attending to the question of funding for this component of publicly-funded education. Aside from Murphy, this researcher detected no strong support among commissioners for the continued existence of a separate school system, a theme that was also a leitmotif of public insider organizations in the hearings. This researcher said: "The value of religion in education was not shared by commissioners, except for Murphy. Roman Catholic rights were only seen by them as a constitutional issue. If Roman Catholic schools could have been up for grabs, I think they would have been."

The rights of Ontario Roman Catholics under section 93 of the Constitution Act had been reaffirmed as late as 1987 in the Supreme Court decision regarding the legality of the Ontario government's decision (Bill 30) to extend funding to separate schools. The Court's decision pointed out that because section 93 represented a fundamental part of historic compromise surrounding Confederation, it was shielded from equality-based arguments based on section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Mawhinney (1993) specified how various groups used both the Constitution Act and the Charter to argue for and against the extension of funding. The experience of RCOL would suggest that the Supreme Court decision may have settled the question from a judicial point of view, but from the perspective of the public hearings and the mindset of most of the commissioners, the political dimension of separate school funding lingered as a contested issue.

If the Constitution acted to curb potential secularizing tendencies, Ontario political elites also played a part in defining the current political culture to expand "the zone of appropriate action" (Bell, 1984, p. 156) in regard to publicly-funded Catholic education in Ontario. Both the debates around Bill 30 (Mawhinney, 1993) and the situation that RCOL faced emphasized that the security of the separate school system rested not simply on constitutional guarantees but also on a large measure of provincial political will.

The decision to extend separate school funding to the OAC level and to upset the status quo, after all, was a decision personally undertaken in 1984 by the Progressive Conservative Premier Bill Davis, without informing his Minister of Education, Dr. Bette Stephenson, who opposed the extension of funding (Mawhinney, 1993). Honouring that decision was the choice made by the succeeding Liberal government of David Peterson and his Minister of Education, Sean Conway, despite strong public
lobbying that the new government should veto the extension of funding. The Leader of the Opposition in 1986, Bob Rae, publicly supported this Liberal decision, much to the consternation of OSSTF (Mawhinney, 1993). Explicitly instructing RCOL commissioners to respect the integrity of the separate system as part of their mandate was the instruction of the Liberals' successors, the New Democratic government, as was the decision to place a spokesperson of Roman Catholic interests on the Commission. The separate school supporters' present funding levels and power-connectedness are the results, then, of a string of political decisions made over a decade by the political elites of three different governments, decisions that remain contested by powerful interest groups.

RCOL pushed this zone of acceptance even further by recommending a reorganization of the tax system that would redistribute funds on a more equitable basis to assessment-poor boards, disproportionately Catholic and francophone. More than any other recommendation, this proposal was a signal that the equity debate had crested on extended funding and French-language governance, an issue that had dominated Ontario educational politics in the 1980s. Ironically, given the turmoil and rancour of the 1980s, this recommendation, and others relating to separate school and francophone issues, were reached within RCOL without much debate, and were accepted as a fait accompli from early on. To paraphrase Caplan (Interview, 1995), once the commissioners accepted the mandate's caveat that the constitutional rights of those two groups be respected, they then considered these recommendations to be a logical progression. The presence of Murphy and Bégin, moreover, ensured that this logical progression would be kept a central priority on RCOL's agenda.

FOUR VALUE-LADEN DEBATES

I turn once again to my observation notes to trace four debates within RCOL which engaged values definition, ambiguity, conflict, and compromise. The first of these debates concerns governance issues, and how and why decisions were made about the distribution of decision-making power at the three levels of the school system. The second debate keynotes deliberations about the Purposes of Schooling section of the Report where values revolve around quality/excellence and equity and their relationship to mission and socialization. The third internal debate is connected to the school purposes discussion, and involves secondary school curriculum and organization, highlighting how differing views of quality, equity, and accountability can be interpreted to reinforce or oppose one another. The fourth
value-laden debate focuses on the issue of choice, a value not given much attention on the agenda but yielding the sharpest conflict among commissioners.

The Governance Debate

At bottom, the notion of governance includes the consideration of power and decision-making, funding, and accountability. The issues, when combined, are unlike any other public sector, and involve three levels of the system: ministry, board, and school. The word "governance" has a uniquely educational connotation centred in provincial prerogatives: I heard Bégin once exclaim that she had never heard of the word before, and she is a seasoned bureaucrat, administrator, and a former federal cabinet minister. This debate unfolded in a difficult and lengthy fashion, from first attempts at discussion in early spring 1994 to its conclusion in December 1994, as the last drafts of other chapters of the Report were heading out the door to the printers.

The governance issue is of interest because, among other things, by rejecting the very clear signal from Minister Cooke that he expected a ringing endorsement of massive amalgamation of school boards from RCOL, the commissioners returned a clear signal that their decision on this issue was not subject to political pressuring from the direction of MET.

In the numerous meetings on governance where I was a participant observer, I gained the distinct impression from the commissioners that governance was for them, with the exception of Glaze, neither a burning interest nor sexy. For governance issues, little of the sparkle was exhibited by commissioners when some other topics were on tap. Given that Roman Catholic and francophone demands on these issues had been assured a fair hearing within the Commission on autonomy and separate board structures, respectively, two potential flash points had been defused. Researchers found the commissioners difficult to get focussed on governance issues and over time it became clear that researcher-prepared discussion papers with "talking points" about governance failed to provide any direction to internal deliberations. As several researchers became wrapped-up in writing draft chapters that staked out more structured positions, the discussions became more targeted. However, not until the winter of 1994 were the following governance issues finalized: Chapter 17, "Organizing Education: Power and Decision-Making," Chapter 18, "Funding," and Chapter 19, "The Accountability of the System."

The governance discussion covered some aspects of accountability, the role of MET in curriculum
and assessment, the role of school boards and service organizations, funding and school finance, discussions on school-based management, the role of principals, the role of school councils, centralization and decentralization, mandates and incentives, and aspects of the College of Teachers. Some of the governance issues were recurring problems that needed re-attending to, such as the number and role of school boards, probably the most studied topic in governance in Canadian education (Goulson, 1981; Manzer, 1994).

Several of the governance issues addressed by Hall-Dennis (1965-1968) were also re-addressed by RCOL:

As with the Parent Commission [Quebec], the Hall-Dennis Committee in Ontario supported the formation of larger units of local school administration as an administrative necessity, but the Hall-Dennis Committee went much further in its recommendations for decentralization of educational decision-making. The Hall-Dennis Committee accepted that to protect the interest and welfare of children in school the provincial department must retain a certain degree of regulatory authority, but in the past provincial regulation had covered too many areas in too much detail, from the square footage of classrooms to specifically prescribed curricula, school visits by provincial inspectors, and teacher certification. Such a `gatekeeper' approach to provincial governance of education must be ended. In theory, then, each school board should establish its own priorities and exercise real autonomy. Only on such a principle can diversity be encouraged in cultural, architectural, curricular, and organizational matters. (Manzer, 1994, p. 194)

In the wake of the release of Hall-Dennis's report in 1968, many of the recommendations for a more decentralized approach to educational decision-making did become a fixture of Ontario public education (not necessarily because of Hall-Dennis), with the larger urban school boards in particular taking a strong hand in curriculum and in standards development and assessment, eclipsing a role once the sole prerogative of provincial authorities. One generation later, to many presenters during RCOL hearings, it was precisely this degree of decentralization that was now perceived as "the problem," raising collateral issues such as costs of duplication of capacities from board to board, tax assessment-rich and assessment-poor boards, the shortfall of system-wide academic standards, and which levels of the system should do what in student assessment. For RCOL, a reconsideration of the gatekeeping role of MET, to use the Hall-Dennis description, was back on the agenda, driven by popular demand and the agenda of Minister Cooke.

An early attempt to organize commissioner thoughts around governance issues was unsuccessful;
the work of two consultants from McKinsey came to nought. Basically, the consultants wanted to engage the commissioners in an exercise of organization design, working from the identification and prioritizing of goals to the design of the distribution of power to the three levels of decision-making in the school system (Ministry, boards, and schools). The commissioners were either unready at this stage to grapple with the issues in this fashion, or unwilling to see the discussion led in this direction. While the two consultants held a half-dozen meetings with RCOLers, the co-chairs and commissioners showed little interest in their approach, and researchers were asked to take their place at some of these. When it became clear to researchers that these meetings would bear little fruit within RCOL, researchers wound these meetings down, offering apologies of a sort and thanking the consultants for their efforts for which the co-chairs could generate little enthusiasm.

A reference to decision-making models might be useful in understanding this impasse. Rather than working from a decision-making framework that first established goals, identified problems, and presented alternative solutions in a format resembling the "bounded rationality" model, commissioners opted for an incrementalist approach (Lindbloom, 1965) for governance issues. This approach in effect was taken less because of disagreement about goals, and more because the commissioners were uneasy discussing them at all at the early stages. Once the general discussion got locked into the writing process by late spring 1994, the discussion of goals outside of the writing process would have been a side-bar activity at best. Other than the already-determined goal that the design of the system should serve student learning, other goals such as equity, adequacy, and balancing power needs would emerge out of numerous draft chapters.

Goal definition also has a connection to the construction of knowledge. Inasmuch as most commissioners' learning curves on governance issues were skewed at the low end at the beginning of this particular discussion process, it is difficult to grasp how goal discussion or concordance/discordance about goals and the larger issues of organizational design would have had any meaning for the commissioners at this early juncture. Goal definition is treated in the hierarchy of policy analysis/organizational design activities as being an initial, critical activity, but this seems to imply that the issues had been addressed and debated, and that the policy players have a clear idea of where they are headed, where they do not want to venture, and what values and goals they wish to affirm, reject, or downplay. Goal definition as an initial activity makes sense if the players possess the expertise to make
this synthetical judgment. On the other hand, goal definition seems less appropriate as an initial activity if the majority of players are non-experts and the more vexing issues had been barely addressed. In RCOL's case, at this juncture, only some of the issues were explored early in the process (the Roman Catholic and francophone concerns, for example), and some thorny questions were not yet resolved (such as the role of school boards) or conceptualized (such as the role of school councils). Although the commissioners did not refer to themselves in this way, "muddling through" (Lindblom, 1965), in short, seemed the only option left to collectively address this issue.

Researcher C (Interview, 1995) said that the governance discussion was delimited because the commissioners used only one criterion, the relationship of governance structures to student learning, in the consideration of issues, when this discussion "could have been better linked to efficiency." The possible connection to efficiency was blocked by Caplan on more than one occasion, his adamant stance being to focus exclusively on learning and equity concerns vis à vis governance. According to some observers, however, the premise that restructuring can only be justified if it is aimed at improving the educational experiences of students:

is both narrow-minded and self-serving in its failure to acknowledge two critical and closely related features of the context in which present and future schools must operate. One of these features is the end of the "borrow now, pay later" school of public finance...A second closely related feature is increased competition from other social services for a greater share of the shrinking pot of public money due to such demographic changes as an aging population and attendant increases in the need for health care. Schools cannot assume, in this context, that changes in the name of improved efficiency are unworthy of their attention. (Leithwood & Menzies, 1996, p. 37)

The greatest problem in governance issues was probably what to do about school boards: leave them as they are, amalgamate numbers of them, amend their powers, or abolish them. The subtext of this identified problem was the high degree of uncertainty because of a lack of clear and comparable data. For example, RCOLers could not find any established criteria, reliable information, or well-researched guidelines that would allow them, one way or the other, to make a judgment about whether massive amalgamation was called for. What analysis is done on this issue in the Report (Vol. 4, pp. 113-114) maintains that compared to comparable jurisdictions, Ontario was not overburdened in this regard, despite Minister Cooke's conviction that chopping was called for. In other cases, RCOLers were unable to obtain information that would help them to make judgments about recommending the downsizing of
school boards, another frequent refrain of the hearings.

Notes: May 30 - Caplan: People don't say what's in board budgets...It's difficult to say what the level of overheads are, they differ from board to board. Caplan cites the Toronto Board of Trade's criticism of school boards as being "top heavy" but he doesn't have much faith in the Board of Trade's generalizations.

July 19 - Begle: It's difficult to establish criteria to keep boards, or to eliminate them. Murphy: School councils can help shorten the distance between the community and the school...There's no proof that amalgamation is a miracle drug. Glaze: The key board of trustees' functions should be guardian of purse, policy development, and quality assurance. The other commissioners concur. Murphy: Don't be driven solely by economic reasons for amalgamation but consider educational benefits first. Caplan: Make it explicit to get rid of Metro [Metro Toronto School Board]. The commissioners agree. Caplan also wants a later discussion on how to limit the numbers of trustees, by wards or municipalities.

Finding out whether the claim of a bloated board-level administrative hierarchy was valid or not was obfuscated by the idiosyncratic methodology by which boards accounted for all personnel, making it very difficult to ascertain what the staffing ratios were. Evidence from school board stakeholders during the hearings suggested the opposite: that since 1992 a steady trend in board downsizing was underway.

As the Report (Vol. 4) noted:

As with so many other educational issues, there are no simple or obvious answers to questions about who should make various decisions, what governance structures make most sense, how authority ought to be exercised, or even what criteria should be used in coming to conclusions. As well, there is surprisingly little research in the area of school governance that could direct us to firm conclusions. (p. 101)

In short, the Report vouches that the external knowledge base concerning educational governance was not sufficiently enlightening as to provide solutions that commissioners felt would be the best choice; thus the tone of this section in the Report is somewhat provisional and conditional. The recommendations are offered with the acknowledgement that given the relatively low level of understanding of these issues, incremental changes aimed at re-balancing the system are probably the only prudent course. This stance is also consistent with the incremental model (Lindbloom, 1959), where skimpy knowledge about an issue acts as a constraint to bold plans. The logic of this model suggests, in the face of knowledge constraints, the only way to find out more about the issue is to make small changes that may not only ameliorate part of the problem but also serve to enlighten policy-makers about other possible solutions.

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This proclivity for incrementalism notwithstanding, some of the RCOL funding recommendations would be perceived by certain stakeholders more as exploding bombshells. For example, public school stakeholders breathed a sigh of relief that no massive amalgamation was called for in the Report. But the three recommendations about funding sent off shock waves in large public board circles with proposals for: a provincially-determined funding model; boards should be restricted to raising an additional ten per cent beyond the provincially-assessed figure through residential assessments; and a scrapping of the "default" provision that directed all tax revenues not specifically targeted for Roman Catholic boards to public boards. All three recommendations were very good news for Roman Catholic, rural, and smaller boards that had pushed in the hearings for these reforms, and very bad news for the large-city public boards whose advantageous tax assessment situation would be nullified if the recommendations were accepted (Vol. 4, p.132). For large urban public boards these recommendations were also unexpected: education finance was specifically mentioned in the mandate statement as out-of-bounds to RCOL's purview. The commissioners waded into the issue because the funding issue impacted on so many equity-related concerns, and it was an issue ultimately linked to the feasibility of implementing the Report itself.

The advocacy of Minister Cooke for amalgamation backfired within RCOL. The persistence of the Minister in pushing for amalgamations, in camera with the commissioners, and in diverse public forums during RCOL's existence, did little to clarify these issues in a conceptual fashion; Cooke's oft-stated public claim that RCOL was studying the issue was interpreted internally as a slight to RCOL's independence, Cooke's presumption being that the detailed nature of amalgamation would be spelled out by RCOL. The commissioners perceived his plans as politically-motivated and intrusive, a hard step on RCOL's toes, and the amalgamation idea was dismissed early in the process as "his agenda, not ours," particularly by the co-chairs. Although RCOL did study the issue and advance arguments that no hard evidence was found to support large-scale amalgamation, the idea of amalgamation was dead in the water long before the finishing touches were applied to the relevant section in Chapter 17 of the Report. As the RCOL interpretation process became entwined in a contested debate about agendas, prerogatives, and political turf with MET and Cooke, the cognitive and evaluative aspects of this debate often took a back seat to political ones, engendered by the co-chairs' fierce protection of the arm's-length relationship and by the commissioners' short-lived exercise of public power.

Notes: May 30: Caplan: Concerning the organization of schooling: We need to get a
better concept, what are the big issues here? Bégir: The government only wants to cut costs: that's their agenda, not ours! Di Cecco: What you need to do is to define governance to support learning and good teaching. Bégir: Yes, we need to link our governance principles to education...right now they seem to be generic to all sorts of organizations. Glaze: But you can't justify governance structures just by focussing on the student. Murphy: I'm in favour of a strong Ministry for assuring curriculum quality and equity...but it too has to be accountable and consultative. Glaze and Bégir concur. Glaze: Add criticism of MET, their pool of expertise has been decimated in last five years according to many educators. Murphy and Glaze: Teachers want clarity in curriculum, they don't have time to interpret the curriculum and the standards need more precision. Glaze: The Ministry should set out content of curriculum, 80 percent common across the province, and let teachers develop teaching strategies.

While not agreeing to grand-scale amalgamation, the commissioners did stake out positions that would significantly diminish the scope of school board discretion. One of these areas was their finding that school board involvement in curriculum development was a costly duplication of effort, and an unnecessary public expense, that produced uneven results, a capacity that smaller, "assessment-poor" boards could afford least of all. The argument that MET was better situated to ensure curriculum consistency and quality was accepted by all commissioners; Glaze and others were successful in arguing that board trustees should focus on policy, quality assurance, and financial stewardship. During the hearings, trustees were subject to much criticism for involving themselves in the operational aspects of schooling; the commissioners thought this was an overstepping of trustees' mandates, and the Report sought to limit trustee roles and, to underscore that point, ceilings were recommended on maximum trustee compensation.

In the hearings the commissioners often heard complaints, notably from school board representatives, of MET's lack of leadership: MET was frequently portrayed as a major contributor to a sense of "rudderless direction" in educational policy (Bégir, Interview, 1995). Commissioners nevertheless committed themselves, early on, to recentralizing core functions that had been in the boards' bailiwick at least since the early 1970s. RCOLers thought it judicious to swing the pendulum back in the direction of centralization.

An idea rooted in the notion of accountability, in professional and public senses, was the proposal for a College of Teachers. The idea for a similar professional governance body had drifted around the policy community for decades, and was given new life within RCOL by the knowledgeable advocacy of
a researcher. The idea of a College was further buoyed by the genuine commitment of the commissioners that teachers have a professional governance body. The College was also envisaged by commissioners as a lever to influence teacher education in the faculties of education, and to lead professional development across the province, two areas of concern raised in the hearings by stakeholders, with the exception of the faculties of education and the teacher federations/associations that saw the proposal as poaching on their turf. One issue about the College that drew some heat within RCOL was the proposed composition of its executive-council membership. To promote accountability to a larger community, Glaze wanted a greater percentage of lay representation than professionals but on this issue she was outnumbered and did not prevail. The second council membership issue resolved in this debate was to ensure that the College did not become unduly influenced or controlled by stacking the executive membership with official representatives of the teacher federations. Commissioners did not want to replicate what they believed to be the British Columbia experience in this regard, where the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation was perceived as possessing a stranglehold on their Teachers’ College through control of the majority of its executive council, a message relayed to RCOL by Murphy and Bharti after their trip to that province. Given the avowed opposition to the idea of a College by a number of teacher organizations, it was felt that once the College was established, the Ontario "Feds" would do their best to co-opt and/or neutralize the College to suit their own agendas by running their own slate of candidates.

Notes: June 30 - Murphy points out that RCOL is supportive of teachers and the College is to hand control of the profession to the teachers. Begin agrees with Murphy. Caplan wants to know how to prevent the College from a takeover by federations. A researcher suggests making subject councils a big part of its executive membership. Commissioners talk about experience in British Columbia with the College of Teachers. Murphy and Bharti maintain that in B.C. the College is perceived as being dominated by the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation. Commissioners do not want that pattern repeated in Ontario. Murphy wants the College to tell faculties what to teach through accreditation procedures. Caplan thinks we need to tame the faculties, we need a lever, and the College could fulfill that role. Glaze is not supportive of the College having entry/exit and decertification powers over teachers. She also thinks that parents and outsiders should have most seats on the College’s executive. Murphy: [in response to Glaze’s suggestion on parents’ seats]: That won’t work! Caplan: The executive be composed of half nonteachers and half teachers. A researcher: There is no teaching ’profession’ compared with others: professionalism is something we have to work for but teachers still should have such a body. Di Cecco: Let its powers evolve over time.
August 19 - Concerning executive membership, Glaze insists it be 50/50 teachers and outsiders. She doesn't want the College controlled by teachers or federations. A researcher disagrees with Glaze, saying the majority of the executive must be comprised of teachers. They need to control their own profession. The other commissioners seem to agree with this researcher. The same researcher suggests that we not be overly descriptive of powers, let MET and the federations work it out. Murphy: Be explicit that the teaching membership should be from subject councils, not as representatives from the federations.

The discussion of local governance in an advisory capacity, in the form of school councils, was complicated and lengthy. Most commissioners supported the concept for different reasons. Cooke's concurrent plan for local councils dominated by parents was perceived as not sufficiently broad-based to connect the local school to the community. Murphy was the strongest advocate for broadly-based school councils, desirous of balancing the power of administrators and teachers with the needs of parents and the broader community. He also saw councils as a potentially integrative mechanism for school-community relations, and for coordinating services at the school level. Bégin and Glaze supported this concept, motivated by their aim to "open up" school decision-making; Bharti embraced the idea because of her interest in seeing schools develop as inclusive communities. Caplan was leery of school councils, fearful that potentially disruptive groups could use them as forums to impose their agendas (particularly Quality Education-type reformers), unnecessarily politicizing local schooling.

Notes: July 13 - Bégin says that the draft chapter on governance is too long and needs to be condensed. Some disagreement still exists among the commissioners about the validity and role of school councils. A researcher suggests using school councils to coordinate local services. Bégin wants greater participation in school decision-making: We need to open up the system. Bégin: Councils should not be just composed of parents [Cooke's proposed councils are parent-dominated]. She thinks most parents don't want active participation in them. Caplan says he's not too fond of the idea of a wider school council, especially the potential influence of business folk in them. Bégin thinks principals could be helped by business people. Murphy: Many parents contended in the hearings that they weren't welcome at schools, and social agencies are also kept at a distance: We will fail miserably if we don't have a school council [recommendation]; either mandate it or put in a powerful incentive [to implement it]. Di Cecco is not in favour of mandating it. Caplan: I agree with [a researcher] that [these councils] are solutions looking for problems. Murphy: There's a sense of not being heard by parents, business, and community organizations.

School-based management was also on the docket, with Glaze and Bégin as the strongest
advocates, Caplan the greatest critic. The equivocal nature of research about whether school-based management had a positive impact on student achievement, brought to light in a commissioned paper by O.I.S.E. researcher Joyce Scane (1995), had a cooling effect on wholehearted support for school-based management. The question of impact, after all, was the main criterion employed by the commissioners to judge whether an idea should be recommended. In this discussion, the question of whether the principal or the school council should have decision-making power in staffing led to disagreement among the commissioners. While Murphy propounded that school councils should advise principals concerning staffing needs, Caplan had strong reservations about giving such councils such an obvious lever to influence overall decision-making.

Notes: July 19 - Glaze would like to see more school-based budgeting, and more staffing decisions made at the local level. Caplan thinks we are creating a disruption into the life of school with school-based management and school councils. The commissioners discuss the lack of evidence for supporting site-based management either way, especially concerning outcomes for learning. Bégin would like principals to hire teachers. Glaze agrees partially but doesn't want principals having the power to fire teachers, as this could be done in an "arbitrary" fashion. Glaze says entrepreneurial-type principals would like school-based management and thinks the basic model will work. Murphy thinks the principal should ask the school council about staffing needs. He doesn't want principals to have all this power. Caplan wants principals to have funds to feed hungry students.

For Caplan, a conception of school-based management in which principals and teachers had the lion's share of clout would also pose a threat to various equity goals that in the recent past had been driven by policy-making at the Ministry and governmental levels, and the hearings made plain that many administrators at the school- and board-levels resented their imposition. Both Caplan and Glaze, despite their frequent disagreements, shared a belief that the equity agenda is best served by an interventionist ministry/government, and that supporting a host of equity-related initiatives required a strong central presence in education, described by a ministry/government with the political will to mandate and enforce provisions for equity, and with appropriate funding mechanisms and levers of power available to the centre to ensure an adequate base for funding equity initiatives and to ensure compliance. Though the goals are different, this equity-oriented, ethical-liberal tinged position shares with a technological liberal orientation the belief that a strong centre is vital to educational policy-making. In the end, the Report equivocated on the issue of decision-making at the local level.

While Murphy was no less committed than Caplan and Glaze to equity and social justice positions,
he also had an unswerving belief, derived from the Roman Catholic philosophy of education, that all parents had "primordial rights" to decide about the goals and process of their children's education, and that this would best be served through strong local governance mechanisms. A corollary of this understanding is that the school is embedded in the local community, and vice versa, and that local accountability and the amelioration of "social" problems are best served through strong local councils.

I turn once again to Manzer (1994) to help put this internal discussion on governance into some historical and conceptual context, especially decision-making at the system-level. Manzer (1994) maintained that post Hall-Dennis Ontario educational policy-making was defined by an evolution from a centralized "tutelage" to the more decentralized "interdependent policy communities," a shift in decision-making more pronounced in Ontario than any other province:

During the late 1960s and early 1970s the normative relationship in educational policy communities shifted from administrative agency and policy tutelage to policy interdependence. As departmental inspection and examinations were abolished and provincial curricula were transformed from detailed prescriptions to flexible guidelines, local superintendents, program consultants, school principals, and classroom teachers progressively acquired greater professional autonomy to design educational programs specifically to meet the needs of their students. Reorganized departments of education oriented their activities towards broader issues of educational planning and program development. Within educational policy communities the structure of policy-making relationships among departmental officials and representatives of teachers' unions and trustees' associations was much less determined by unilateral assertions of regulatory authority by departments and defensive reactions by organized teachers and trustees. (pp. 202-203)

Over the last two decades Ontario, more than any other province, had pursued a decentralized approach in this area, allowing school boards to define curriculum details and standards. Radwanski [in his 1987 report] argued for greater centralization and standardization, contending that students' needs for basic knowledge and skills do not vary significantly across the province. (p. 230)

Using these criteria, some of RCOL's recommendations on governance appear less in the spirit of policy interdependence and more in the spirit of a centralized tutelage, including the recommendations of: a centralized funding model; recentralizing curriculum development to the MET level; creating a centralized assessment agency; and establishing a College of Teachers, at least partially motivated by the desire to have a centralized agency take over the certification, standards of practice, as well as the prescription of standards for teacher education and professional development. The recommendations around the engine
of community education and school councils, on the other hand, would suggest that RCOL had embraced some aspects of a "participatory democracy" policy model: local schools and their communities would be elevated as players in this equation.

The (re-)centralization/decentralization entailed in the above recommendations is a function of the commissioners' desire to establish a "balance" of power needs within the system, i.e., that the power structure not be skewed totally in the direction of one set of players at the expense of the others, although it is difficult not to envisage the large school boards as the losers in this scenario. The Report (Vol. 4) states in this regard:

Over the course of our work, we came to believe that the main organizational issues are, first the high degree of uncertainty and confusion about who is in charge; second, the sense of imbalance in the sharing of power between the key players, with parents and students playing a very minor role. There is also a commonly held perception that the organization of the system is not furthering its goals, accompanied by a belief that drastic changes in governance are required. We carefully considered these concerns, and designed our recommendations to address the problems we identified. (p. 101)

RCOL's recommendations in this regard are consistent with the current North American trend:

There is a shift towards centralization due to governments at the provincial or state level being increasingly concerned with the importance of educational standards, accountability and participatory democracy. Decentralization through school-based management...is shifting authority from the school board towards the individual schools. (Hickcox & Menzies, 1996, p. 124)

From Manzer's (1994) view, these RCOL recommendations that veer the policy process back to a type of centralized tutelage and participatory democracy are also consistent with the trends in official policy studies of the 1990s, a decade in which "the pursuit of excellence" is strongly coloured by a technological liberal conception of education:

[Public accountability must be restored to educational governance and the functions of policy and administration clearly divided between provincial and local educational authorities. The policy framework of public education involving decisions about overall resource allocation to public education, content of the common or core curriculum, provincial standards of educational achievement and mechanisms of accountability should be determined by provincial educational authorities. The function of management should be devolved onto school boards, school councils, and teaching staffs while ensuring the accountability to the policy-determining centre is preserved. (pp. 236-237)
Manzer's conception of policy interdependence in Ontario education policy making perhaps understates that school boards in Ontario during this period exhibited a wide degree of divergence in particular forms of relationships to the centre. This understanding is critical to understanding RCOL's recommendations on governance. Money and power needs are the twin themes driving this scenario. As RCOL noted, for many Ontario school boards, what power they have vis-à-vis the Ministry was often a function of size and wealth:

Ontario's method of financing schools through a combination of property taxes and provincial grants is not unique in Canada, although a higher proportion of our education revenue comes through property taxes than in any other province. The relatively low level of direct provincial support for elementary and secondary education means that the province has less control over school-board decision-making, particularly with boards that have the capacity to raise entire budgets from local taxes. (The Report, Vol. 4, p.128)

Vertical decentralization in Ontario educational policy-making was thus highly selective and more pronounced in the larger urban boards; the majority of boards that were smaller, rural, isolate, Roman Catholic, or francophone, on the other hand, without such a generous local tax base, were much more reliant on the Ministry for grants, dependent on larger school boards for curriculum and professional development, and in practice less decentralized than they would appear on paper. Smaller, poorer boards could never thumb their collective nose at the Ministry in the manner the Toronto and Ottawa public boards did with regularity in the 1970s and 1980s.

The notion of policy interdependence may also camouflage the ebb and flow in educational politics that had taken on a marked degree of conflictiveness in the last decade. The stalemate in Ontario educational policy-making as outlined in the Report (Vol. 1), and the increasingly conflictive tone in educational politics over the last decade, might suggest that a key premise of the notion of policy interdependence, a cessation of stakeholder "unilateral assertions" and "defensive actions," obscures the reality that theoretical relationships often take a back seat to an incessant struggle for political power:

...[T]he general patterns of the relationship [between school boards and other stakeholders] have moved from predominant notions of mutual trust to notions of a political relationship. That is, school members are motivated on the basis of political interest and on the basis of exercising power to achieve specific ends, not necessarily educational ends. (Hickcox & Menzies, 1996, p. 118)

The same could be said for the relationship of MET with teacher organizations during this period.
The Purposes of Schooling Debate

The purposes of schooling section of the Report was not planned in the original outline and was not identified in the mandate’s terms of reference. The conception of this section was the initiative of a researcher who felt that clarification was urgently needed to sort out the conflicting expectations raised in the hearings about the role of schools and about what schools should be held accountable for. RCOLer understandings of school purposes would to a large extent provide the frame by which to present the argumentation of their vision of public education, and major recommendations and engines would be justified in relation to their conception of the purposes of schooling.

The Report (Vol. 1, p. 48) was clear about the role of the hearings in stirring the purposes debate and in outlining conflicting images that needed to be addressed within RCOL:

We were told repeatedly that our job was to clarify the purpose of education so that schools, teachers, and principals would have a clear mandate, and parents would know the system's expectations of them and their children.

One frequently heard opinion was that, at the moment, schools are taking on too much, or are being expected to take on too much.

There was a sense that in attempting to do everything, schools are not able to do anything excellently. This accounts for the common parental complaint that educational basics are being neglected. We frequently heard the call for schools to focus more on teaching reading, writing, and numeracy.

Many presenters saw a vital link between the quality of the education system and the health of the economy.

Many individuals and groups drew a clear distinction between the responsibilities of the family and those of the school. Others, however, particularly in the francophone and Roman Catholic communities, saw the school as acting in loco parentis and expect the values and traditions of the home to be supported by the school.

The second general view we heard concerning the purposes of education stressed the role of schools in moving society toward greater equity, and the need for the education system to structure itself in ways that permit students from all backgrounds and with all levels of ability to have equivalent opportunities to succeed.

In this outline are the major elements of the purposes of school discussion, a mixed bag of identified
problems, core ideas, and alternative understandings about the public expectations for schools that are
composites of educational ideology. In keeping with Manzer's framework (1994), the first view cited in
the Report combines classical liberal, technological liberal, communitarian, and conservative concerns,
while the second view is based on a value base that is ethical liberal/socialist.

Part of the first view of schooling (Vol. 1, p.48) maintains that schools are overloaded with non-
educative tasks that detract from the attainment of core academic goals. The source of these additional
tasks was attributed in hearings to the "baggage" that students bring with them to school that in one way
or another impedes the teaching and learning process, as well as to the non-educative mandates assigned
to schools because of legislative agendas. Implicitly, this view is partially the equity-eclipsing-excellence
argument, but it is also the claim that schools need more buffering from their environment, and that the
proper role of provincial authorities is to facilitate this buffering. Schools in this view are first and
foremost societal centres of learning, and not societal institutions for the amelioration of social ills, hence
the demand to return to the basics or the new basics.

This conception of back-to-the-basics should not to be confused with another back-to-basics
argument, also a mainstay of the hearings, that is essentially curriculum-focussed, emphasizing literacy
and numeracy while downplaying the role of non-core subjects and of curriculum choice, and the
crowding of the curriculum with government-mandated topics like AIDS education, anti-racist education,
and others. The argument cited in the Report is instead mission-focussed, and involves the definition of
proper roles of societal institutions and the role of the state and the family in support of those roles. This
mission-oriented position was frequently framed, particularly by inside stakeholders, by the recognition
of dwindling resources allocated by various levels of government for publicly-funded education in the face
of growing demands on public schooling. Whether one construes the dwindling resource problem as the
consequence of destructive political choice or as a necessary element in the struggle against public deficit
and debt, the reality in public education is, to paraphrase Paquette (1995), not only that there is no new
money, there is less of the old money too. To some extent, the coupling of demands of a renewed mission
for public schooling with the reality of diminished public resources for the foreseeable future is a new
problem facing public education, and one that RCOL was faced with, unlike the Hall-Dennis Committee
and the Hope Commission. This understanding of Paquette's is perhaps unique among the scholarly
treatments I have cited.
The first view mentioned in the passage from the Report (Vol. 1, p. 48) also refers to values. The first part of this section, in stating that there are distinct differences in the roles of the family and of the school, implies that the values of the two are not necessarily complementary, that what is the public domain and what is the private domain are two separate spheres of activity that should be respected by both institutions. This is a core belief of classical liberalism (Manzer, 1994). The next part of this section evokes the communitarian-based understanding of the relationship between familial values and schools, that the values of the former should be respected and embodied in the values of the latter (Manzer, 1994). While the Report attributes the communitarian stance to Roman Catholic and francophone communities, the net of presenters using this argument extended to include an assortment of views including the conservative-based idea that schools should promote traditional values that are ascribed to by many families, such as Judeo-Christian values. While some presenters used this position to justify claims for funding religious-choice schools as they saw no possibility of respect for traditional values in the public component as presently constituted, many others rejected what they portrayed as a zealously secularist value-base in schools. The Report did attend positively to the "special purposes" value considerations of the Roman Catholic and francophone communities, and addressed the religious-choice issue (see below), but the conservative argument regarding traditional values received scant regard, despite Murphy's sole efforts on behalf of this view.

The second view of the purpose of schooling, of "moving society towards greater equity" (Vol. 1, p. 48), is the understanding of the school as social leveller, that its critical function is to acknowledge and deal with the specific challenges that may pose a barrier to student achievement and future life chances. Manzer (1994) classifies the second view as consistent with the person-regarding, ethical liberal perspective of the purpose of schooling, a notion he claims is shared by social democrats and socialists. These challenges to equality may consist of a growing welter of student variables including "gender, visible difference, ethnicity, culture, language, wealth, income, age, social class, parental education, and physical and mental handicaps" (Paquette, 1995, p. 45). While the Report (Vol. 1, p. 48) speaks of promoting "equality of opportunity," presenters also spoke of promoting equality of treatment and of results. While the notion of equality is central to modern principles of public-education funding and governance, it is "also notoriously controversial and difficult to measure":

Equality of opportunity, the talisman of modern public education, is almost impossible to
define in any way likely to produce broad agreement. Equality of treatment, if it is taken to mean the same programs delivered in the same way to all students, typically reinforces and legitimates the differences in cultural capital that students bring to school with them rather than ameliorating them. And equality of results hinges on just what results one might choose to measure: grades, standardized test results, criterion-referenced test results, competency-based skill tests, income, satisfaction, self-image, contribution to an academic community, or whatever. (Paquette, 1995, p. 45)

The two views presented in the Report of the purposes of schooling are, then, actually several views that are grounded in an overarching spectrum of political philosophies, some of which reinforce or overlap each other, and some of which are frequently presented as contesting visions of what public schools are for. Each view, especially the equality-based one, presents particular problems for evaluation. To some extent, the mission/resources argument is an overarching concern of the 1990s that affects whatever view one holds on the purpose of schooling.

Within RCOL the debate on the purpose of schooling contained all the elements of the broad spectrum of political philosophies within RCOL and focussed not only on the purposes or rationale for public education but also on the values that should define that system, particularly the values imparted to students. The politics of this debate was less multilateral than two-sided. In the main, this debate implicitly centred on the excellence/equity axis, but these two values were not posed as mutually-exclusive values, that schools are faced with a choice of either/or. All parties were committed to both values; the debate was essentially about the degree of emphasis each should receive in the design of school reform, about where the values should be placed in the goal hierarchy. One side within RCOL thought that the primary goal of schools should be excellence/quality: to promote intellectual development, with a number of secondary purposes, such as citizenship and preparation for work/career development and other goals. In this view equality was seen as a means to an end, and as a constraint that should be addressed but not made superordinate in the scheme of things. This position translated into insisting that intellectual development be explicitly enshrined as the primary goal of public education; it also meant supporting centralized curriculum development and centralized assessment, and the recognition that the secondary school curriculum should be differentiated on levels of ability and of destination. This position was supported by the researcher writing the piece on purposes, and was a notion emphatically embraced by Bégard and Bharti, with support from Murphy on the academic side. The second grouping within RCOL envisaged schools as being the natural institution for attending to all the
needs of children and youth. Glaze and Caplan were the most vocal supporters of this position, with some researchers of a similar frame of mind.

This prioritizing of goals and principles of curriculum design, school organization, and assessment are consistent with what Manzer (1994, pp. 213-237) described as the "pursuit of excellence" scenario of the 1990s, a debate in which the technological liberal vision of education came to predominate, and which were common denominators of official educational policies in this decade. While in content resembling the technological liberal approach, the pursuit of excellence side of the debate inside RCOL did not buy into the rationale of this approach, i.e., excellence-for-the-sake-of-global economic competition. No commissioner was supportive of a major tenet of either economic or technological liberalism that suggests the need for a close fit between the knowledge and skills produced in schools and those required for industry, commerce and technological society, nor was there agreement that the goals of public schooling should include the acknowledgment of a close link between the knowledge and skills that graduates possess and the health of the economy. The treatment of the needs of the future economy and the relationship of schooling in Volume 1 of the Report was shaded by uncertainty at best, a view that implicitly rejects a core assumption of technological liberalism. This piece of argumentation, largely written by Caplan, was not challenged by the other commissioners and its Henry Levin-influenced evocation (1993) of a "pear-shaped" economy in which only an elite strand might be advantaged, parallels a fundamentally socialist take on this issue, according to Manzer (1996):

Socialists are much more pessimistic than are liberals about the impact of technological society on human welfare. The revolution in information technology does create highly skilled jobs, but technological society is not characterized by such jobs...The central problem of technology is not achieving mass technical literacy and numeracy, as liberals contend, but creating a framework of political and economic institutions in which distributive justice is secured for people on both sides of the technological division of labour. (Manzer, 1996, p. 24)

Rejecting the technological liberal notion of educational purpose, commissioners chose a rationale that promotes educational reform that they thought would appeal to a broad range of stakeholders and the public, and not in the service of any particular interests or groups nor connected in a direct way with the needs of the economy however defined. Instead, while acknowledging the need to connect the school system to its environment, RCOLers settled upon the basic rationale that the nature and pace
of external change demanded a harmonious response in the nature of schooling:

...The times they are a-changing - technologically, socially, economically, demographically - at a pace so bewildering that widespread anxiety is the inevitable result. We felt that disquiet in our public hearings from parents, business people, teachers, and young people themselves. And of course this anxiety has increased substantially in the past couple of years as a result of the fear of escalating violence in our schools in communities across the province.

So we can actually say, in the end, that there is a shared concern out there. It's that Ontario's schools aren't equipped to deal with the future - a problem significantly exacerbated by our utter ignorance of what the future might bring. (The Short Version, p.3)

While Manzer (1996) characterized RCOL's argument as centred on the educational response to technological change, RCOL's actual argument is based on a wider vision of change, one that in fact was invoked to justify the sweeping scope of reform in the Hall-Dennis Report (Gidney, 1996). For RCOLers, this perception of change required that teaching and learning be reformed in the sense of moving with the times. Thus a considerable amount of the Report is devoted to students, the learning process and the curriculum, but also to teachers, and how they should be educated and developed in the context of a rapidly changing environment. Because change is constant and to a large extent unknowable in its shapes and impacts, preparing students and teachers for life-long learning is an important theme developed within the Report.

Another understanding of the goals of public education developed by the commissioners is reflected in the title of the Report, For the Love of Learning, a description that was Bharti's idea. The title implies that, in light of the uncertainty of the future, the active personal pursuit of knowledge in its own right is a worthy goal for public education, a conception of education that is embedded in the centuries-old liberal arts notion of "artes-artis-gratiae or learning for the sake of learning." Paquette (1995, p. 52), who shared RCOL's scepticism about the technological and economic future, maintained that as the impact of a technology-driven society becomes clear, revealing that the benefits of a high-tech bonanza could disproportionately go to an elite minority, the non-economic purposes of schooling ("especially promotion of social harmony and order") would emerge as central, including "the oldest and most venerable justification for human learning - the joy and satisfaction of knowing itself." To some extent, Bharti's idea, although not justified in the Report according to Paquette's argument, was
based on the same logic. What was missing from RCOL's reworking of the traditional liberal view of learning for its own sake was the accent on traditional content and values, the theme of the great ideas and cultural understandings being passed on from one generation to the next (Emberley & Newell, 1994; Holmes, 1980; Nikiforuk, 1993), and the notion that underscores a key task of leaders in public schools as "managers of virtue" (Tyack & Hansott, 1982).

The Short Version concluded on this issue:

...[T]he primary purpose of schooling is not to train students for a particular job, or to turn out a product, or to make Ontario more competitive in a globalized economy, or to compensate for a broken family, or to instill worthy values that others have neglected. On the contrary, there is one thing above all that teachers are singularly equipped for. First and foremost, their purpose must be to ensure for all students - high levels of what we've chosen to call literacies...[A]llmost all students have the capacity to complete secondary school with a great deal more academic excellence. (p.5)

Excellence in this case is defined in terms of the acquisition of what are called process-oriented skills, not the acquisition of an identified core knowledge and set of common values: "more rigorous analytic capacity, more genuine intellectual understanding, more power of thinking, [and] problem-solving" (Short Version, p.5).

Despite the above claim that "schools should not compensate for a broken family or to instill worthy values that others have neglected" the position that defends the alternative perspective was promoted vigorously within RCOL, particularly by Caplan and Glaze. This position was more sensitive to the equity/equality agenda, and while not opposing the excellence agenda, maintained that the equity-related goals of schooling needed more explicit emphasis in the Report. This position saw schools serving broad purposes related to promoting equity: not only paying heed to traditional academic and socialization goals, but also attending to those associated with "pastoral care", the responsibility of schools and teachers for the general care and welfare of their charges. Glaze firmly believed, influenced by Nel Noddings (1992), that schools could not avoid their pastoral care duties. Caplan was highly influenced by Sandro Contenta (1994), who argued that the hidden curriculum of Ontario schools socialized students into submissiveness and passivity, because "submitting to the status quo is prized and rewarded" (quoted in Report, Vol.1, p.58-59). The curriculum is "hidden" because underlying values and preferred behaviours are usually transmitted by educators to students in subtle, often unstated ways, and are not taught explicitly as is the case with the "regular" or "open"
curriculum that features language arts, mathematics, and so forth. Contenta's tome is described by Manzer (1996, p. 26) as an "ethical liberal" position. Caplan also admired the work of the American academic and social critic Seymour Sarason (1990), who characterized schools as authoritarian and inimical to the inculcation of democratic values. Caplan, in internal deliberations, frequently cited the work of the California-based Australian, R.W. Connell (1993), who saw schools as critical institutions for the promotion of social justice, particularly in countering the effects of socio-economic variables that consistently skewed academic achievement levels in favour of the advantaged.

Although the Report (Short Version, p.5) did feature intellectual development as the primary goal of schooling, in the internal debates Caplan consistently argued that narrowing the focus to intellectual development was "invidious," in effect "pandering" to demands of Quality Education reformers. Murphy and Bégin were of the opinion that the goal of intellectual development was not inherently elitist as Caplan claimed, but that the clear backing of academic achievement would benefit the vast majority of students. Glaze also wanted a spectrum of educational goals to include equal emphasis on physical, affective, and transformative domains. Caplan and Glaze were also the most vocal advocates of the school as an instrument for social levelling, that schools should seek to ameliorate obstacles to student achievement that are related to socio-economic, ethno-cultural, and other related variables. They were adamant in their position that the burden of non-educative tasks, summarized in the overload argument, was part and parcel of schooling and that it was illusory to suggest that schools could be exempted from them. The proponents of an excellence agenda countered with the claim that these tasks should not detract from goals related to academic achievement, and that a clear demarcation should be established about what schools are accountable for.

Notes: April 18, 1994 - Caplan says angrily to the researcher who wrote the first draft on purposes: It's invidious to single out literacy/numeracy as the central task of the system. Why not history? You are pandering to certain groups. Murphy: We're not just pandering to the Quality Education people but we're appealing to a wider community. Caplan: We need to watch our definitions carefully. Murphy: We have to make distinctions between primary and secondary purposes because of the confusion in the system.

Notes: June 14 - Caplan says we cannot clarify purposes anymore: Our job is to tell people that it's not going to get easier...We don't have magic answers. Murphy: We need to reassure teachers, then talk about the four pillars. Bégin: We can't conclude that the system has failed...but it seems so disconnected. A researcher: If we can agree that
schools can't do everything, what should they drop or address through community alliances? Caplan doesn't think that schools can escape non-academic tasks, nor does he believe that school councils can play any significant role in coordinating such services. The social agencies have no extra resources to give; we have to expect teachers to do the best they can under the circumstances.

Notes: June 14 - Glaze: If we make suggestions to get other people to do things at schools, people will laugh at us, especially concerning child abuse...Schools have a role in pastoral care. A researcher refers to Seymour Sarason's observation that expectations about schools are characterized by the myth of unlimited resources...maybe we have to acknowledge dilemmas. Di Cecco: We need to address how the broader system (ministries and agencies) can work together. Caplan: We have to be realistic. Murphy: There's no quick fix: things are going to take time. A researcher says that emphasizing the caring/nurturing aspects of schooling may not sit well with teachers, especially if schools go overboard in this direction. Bégin to Glaze: I'll be blunt: we need to be tough [and talk about what schools and teachers should be expected to do and what they shouldn't be expected to do].

Neither side abandoned its arguments on the purposes of schools debate, but settled, halfheartedly, on a compromise of sorts suggested by a researcher, that the non-academic goals of schools should be addressed by schools, but not primarily by teachers. This position, evoking the value of community, was slowly being fleshed out within RCOL with the complement of the pieces on community alliances and on the role of the school council.

Commissioners reiterate that teachers shouldn't give up on non-teaching subjects, with Glaze and Caplan the strongest voices on this issue. A researcher replies: We're removing non-academic subjects from teachers, not from schools. Commissioners say: Make this explicit. Bégin: With the 40 percent factor plus overloading, we may have to consider shortening the school day. Glaze: We could eliminate some things from the curriculum (Observation notes, July 7, 1994).

Academic critics of RCOL were quick to point out that the overload argument in the Report is not very convincing: while hoping that school councils and better coordination of services would off-load some educative services, what RCOLers recommended, just in the area of exceptional students, would place even more of a burden on teachers and schools. Additional duties would include more frequent assessments, classroom integration, instruction in students' second language, and increased use of school counsellors and community resources (Crealock & Laine, 1996), without touching upon the thorny issue of where the extra resources should be mustered for their
implementation (Rees, 1996).

In the internal debate on purposes, the position was developed early, prodded by Murphy and Bégin, that various components of the system had special purposes that were linked to the Roman Catholic, francophone, and native communities, and these three sections of the Report were developed largely without the difficulty that attended the purposes of the public school component. Bégin said that while the Roman Catholic supporters in the last ten years had reached a position of "critical mass," the two other communities were embroiled in a struggle for "cultural survival" and the discussion of the purpose of schooling for these communities should reflect this situation. The communitarian element was strongly represented on this issue within RCOL.

Notes: May 9 - Commissioners are reading through the latest draft of the Purposes section. They discuss specific purposes of the educational system for Roman Catholics, francophones and natives, with the latter two groups seeing education as key to their survival as communities in Ontario. Bégin says that Roman Catholics have already reached a critical mass, and are beyond the survival mode.

Commissioners were also divided into two camps about what values the public system should impart to students. The actual time spent on this issue within RCOL was surprisingly little, given the great deal of attention that this issue generated in the public hearings and the attention that scholars like Manzer (1994;1996), Paquette (1995), and others have devoted to the topic. Caplan avoided any serious discussion of the issue because he thought, given the "cacophony" of the hearings and the obvious differences of opinion within RCOL, that such an exercise was "utopian" in nature. Commissioners did not make as strong a statement on values as Murphy, wearing his social justice hat, would have wanted, namely an articulation of "communitarian" virtues, an idea seconded by Bégin. Murphy also wanted a greater emphasis on moral education and development throughout the publicly-funded system, but this was not supported by other commissioners.

*Murphy*: A purpose should be a sense of commonweal, a sense of community, of social justice, altruism, solidarity: communitarian virtues. *Bégin*: We should add respect for diversity while valuing your own roots. *Caplan*: There's a problem with this. Why should we define a value that many people don't agree with?...We don't want to sound silly and utopian. Let's be practical. (Observation Notes, May 9, 1994)

July 18 - *Caplan*: We need to stress human values such as [evoked in the poem by the concentration camp survivor]. *All commissioners* agree to insert the poem in this section.
A researcher says the final draft will stress that the main purpose of schools is intellectual development. Murphy: We need to stress values more. Glaze (forcefully): There's nothing that is physical, affective, or transformative mentioned in Purposes. Schools can change people for the better.

Caplan was also against any articulation of a value that Quality Education reform or technological liberal supporters could endorse, such as the notion of competition as a worthwhile value to promote excellence (a view supported by Bégin, Bharti, and Murphy), nor would he come close to backing a view to socialize students according to the needs of a capitalist society. Instead, Caplan favoured the inculcation of values that encouraged students to be "feisty" and "questioning" rather than being "passive" recipients of societal values. This socialist stance rejects both the technological liberal argument that the values, knowledge, and skills favoured by the market place should dominate the agenda of public schooling and the conservative and liberal arts notion that schools should be transmission belts of core societal values and of traditional knowledge. The socialist view on this issue was summed up in a presentation to RCOL by James Turk (1993), Director of Education for the Ontario Federation of Labour, that the purpose of public education "is not to take the status quo for granted and adapt individuals to it. Rather it is to help people individually and collectively to think knowledgeably and critically about the world as they find it, to see that world in new and different ways and to be able to be activists in respect to their views." While supporters of critical thinking as a valued skill range from Socrates to Dewey (Billig et al., 1988), a socialist perspective on critical thinking moves beyond these largely philosophical and cognitive approaches, to posit that educators should socialize students to be socially-conscience political activists who reject the dominant values of capitalism and a subset of values socialist attribute to a clutch of "isms": sexism, paternalism, authoritarianism, racism, classism, to name but a few (Delhi, 1995; Martell, 1996). Conservative theorists, on the other hand, such as Holmes (1986, 1991) argue that schools should impart values and behaviours that are consistent with parental norms and expectations.

Caplan: Competition in the school system is bad (citing exams as an example). Look at the hidden curriculum. Bégin: But competition can be very good. Caplan: It's hard to teach democratic values in school when it's an authoritarian system (citing the work of Seymour Sarason). Bharti: What values do we want to define? Murphy: Leave it in [the researcher's] hands. (Observation Notes: May 9, 1994)

Reflecting both sides within RCOL, the Report equivocates on the question of what values the
school should impart to students. Thus the articulation of values that schools should transmit to students is a mixed bag of communitarian and conservative values supported by Murphy and Bégin, and social activist values favoured by Caplan and Glaze of a socialist/social democrat hue: "some sense of honesty, truth, civility, social justice, and co-operation, and a determination to combat violence, racism, gender inequality, and environment degradation" (Vol.1, p.61).

Equivocality is also visible in another section of the Report (Vol.1, p.54) that lists the following key purposes of publicly-funded education: intellectual development, defined as "central," to "ensure high-level literacies"; learning to learn, fostering a "love of learning"; citizenship; preparation of work/career development; and instilling values of a "cultural, moral, and/or spiritual" nature that reflect special purposes: "non-violence, anti-racism, honesty, and justice, individual responsibility, and service to the community." In this listing the excellence agenda position generally prevails over the "pastoral care" position. However, the articulation in this same section of the hidden curriculum and the transmission of values that characterizes many schools as "authoritarian" supporters of the "status-quo," seeking to "pacify" students, bore the socialist stamp of Caplan (Vol.1, pp.58-61).

As in other parts of the Report where disparate commissioner values were at stake, the section on purposes demonstrates the commissioners' penchant for equivocality, the accommodation of multiple meanings through mutual adjustment. Aside from the issue of rejecting the technological liberal position on connecting the purpose of schooling with the needs of the global economy, little consensus was reached within RCOL about what values should inform the school system. Commissioners held fundamentally different views not only about what values should inform public schooling, but also about what roles schools should play in inculcating them. The scant attention given to this issue is indicative of Caplan's stance that he thought such discussions to be "utopian," but as a major contributor to the writing of the Report, Caplan was vigorous in espousing what values and purposes he thought schools should promote, and these were not openly contested, although Bégin and Murphy in interviews expressed their disappointment in how this discussion evolved. Once the writing process was in full swing, the sheer volume of words and recommendations and the time constraints meant that once something was committed to paper it was difficult to change, if it even got noticed. But a challenge at this stage was unlikely: equivocality and accommodation had established the implicit rules of the game: if Caplan would swallow hard and accept the idea of intellectual
development as the primary purpose, an idea he characterized as insidious, and argue for it in the Short Version despite his belief, then the other commissioners would swallow hard and accept Caplan's reluctance to discuss value preferences, and they would accommodate his articulation of values according to a value system that he identified with.

The Secondary Schools Debate

As noted in greater detail in Chapter 2, Manzer (1994, p. 235) contends that official policy documents of the 1990s agree on several aspects of curriculum policy: the basic knowledge and skills should be taught around a core of language arts, mathematics, and science, while incorporating the traditional liberal educational concerns of civic education, occupational selection, and individual development. Current policy documents also agree on the need for a common or core curriculum for elementary and secondary education and that this commonality implies "putting limits on the accommodation of individual differences" and limits on the protection and promotion of social diversity in educational institutions and curricula. Official policies also stress the need to measure educational results as the test not only of the accountability of the system but also of its efficiency and effectiveness. This orientation of official studies in the 1990s corresponds with much of the substance of the excellence and accountability agenda promoted by supporters of the technological liberal philosophy of public education (Manzer, 1994, pp. 212-237).

Beyond the question of points of agreement of current policy documents on a national scale, the public hearings vocalized substantial points of disagreement around particular topics regarding curriculum and school organization that reflect contending views about: the relative merits of stressing skills and ability-based processes of learning as opposed to the transmission of a core body or content of knowledge; whether group-based or whole-class teaching and learning is the appropriate unit; whether the curriculum should be organized tightly in sequential steps from K to 12 or in a spiral format that builds in deliberate redundancy; whether the secondary curriculum should focus on integrated themes or maintain a strict subject-oriented focus; whether the evaluative criteria should focus on sharply-defined educational objectives or pursue the current focus on learning outcomes; whether competition among students should be encouraged or discouraged; what degree of student assessment is adequate and which level of the system should drive assessment; at what point, if any,
in the secondary curriculum there should be a recognition of the need for separate programs, or streaming or tracking, based on levels of difficulty and on different student destinations; and if different destinations are to be made explicit in curriculum organization, which type of differentiation of programs is called for. Some of these topics were addressed in internal deliberations by RCOLers; all of them were tackled, directly or indirectly, in Volume 2 of the Report.

In the public hearings, many of these issues triggered emotive hot buttons because they were not commonly perceived as technical items for which professional expertise can provide ready answers; rather they were most often conceived as agenda items attached to educational ideologies in particular and political philosophies in general.

The issue of the appropriateness of an educational ideology for a particular level is also a recurring theme of relevance here. For example, in this view, the child-centred progressiveness of the Hall-Dennis report has been ascribed to the elementary-school (professional) backgrounds of its sponsors like Jack McCarthy in the Ministry and of its primary author, Lloyd Dennis (Gidney, 1996). In this case the ideology that imbued the elementary panel was perceived as being foisted upon the secondary panel. This position was also part of the critique of child-centred education in the public hearings, an educational ideology that held a "hegemonic" status in public education in Ontario for a generation (Manzer, 1994).

In the public hearings, the idea of progressive educational ideology was readily equated with both the recommendations of the Hall-Dennis Committee (1968) and the subsequent policies of the Ontario government that were construed as compatible with those objectives, with the present educational structure of the elementary panel, and at the secondary level, especially with the articulation of Circular H.S.1, 1969-1970, revised in 1970-1971, that radically reorganized the secondary school system on the basis of the credit system and maximized student choice (Ricker, 1981; Stapleton, 1975). Although subsequent revisions over the decades altered the degree of student choice with compulsory cores in the mid-1970s, and differentiated levels of programming (basic, general, and advanced) were established at the secondary level, the perception was palpable in the hearings that this area of secondary education needed still more extensive reform. In the 1980s, the recommendations of ROSE (the Reorganization of the Ontario Secondary School System) and the subsequent guidelines OSIS (Ontario Schools: Intermediate, Senior) had reorganized the intermediate
years from grade 7 to 10 (Lambie, 1984; Baker, 1985), but critics in the hearings complained that grades 7 and 8 were not challenging enough and that this type of grouping was weakest in the grade 8 - 9 interface, failing to prepare students properly for the demands of secondary school; and the recent Transition Years initiative was often portrayed in the hearings as an extension of elementary educational culture into the secondary domain. Despite the intention of OSIS, grade 13 had not been eliminated to bring Ontario in line with other provinces, as at least 85 percent of students undertook a fifth year of secondary schooling at the renamed Ontario Academic Credit level (OAC); its elimination was stymied by a combination of university pressure to retain Grade 13 equivalent courses, by inflexible scheduling and school organization, and by opposition from OSSTF based on projections of potential lost teaching positions (King, 1995). The recent Ministry attempt to reorganize the senior secondary years (the Specialization Years) had run aground. Mark inflation, partially driven by extensive retaking of courses and maximizing credits and perceived unfairness in marking were cited in the hearings as major problems, often portrayed as reflective of the lack of some centralized, if not objective, means of student assessment. Finally, while school-to-work structures were fixtures of modern school systems worldwide, Ontario had done little to address this issue. The idea that "something had to be done" about the secondary school issue was a common denominator of the hearings, one that the commissioners could not avoid but found extremely difficult to address.

At the heart of this internal debate lies a contrasting definition of how to promote academic excellence at the secondary school level: whether it should be defined as differentiated standards and programs based on the idea of student destinations or on the idea of high expectations placed upon all students by a common curriculum from K to OAC. The subtext of this debate is emotively connected to issues of race, ethnicity, and the disadvantaged. This debate was strongly influenced by recent educational policy initiatives in Ontario that simultaneously tried to address equity concerns and the demand for more results-oriented policies designed to boost academic excellence:

In September 1992 the minister of education in the NDP government (Tony Silipo) confirmed that beginning in September 1993 grade 9 students would no longer be streamed into basic, general, and advanced courses. In addition, grade 9 curriculum would be converted from credit courses in conventional subjects to integrated studies in 4 areas: language, the arts, self and society, and mathematics, science, and technology. These reforms (dubbed the "three D's," for delabelling, destreaming, and decoursing) encountered stiff criticism from parents' groups and business interests, and an emergency
meeting of the Ontario Secondary Teachers' Federation called for the minister to resign. In November 1992 the embattled minister announced that destreaming would proceed as scheduled, but rather than starting in September 1993, "decoursing" would be implemented over a 3 year period.

Delabelling, destreaming, and decoursing were evidently motivated by the NDP government's commitment to improve racial and ethnic equity in education, but the forthcoming educational reforms also promised approaches more oriented to results. A "common curriculum" would specify desired learning outcomes for students in maths, reading, and writing, at the end of grades 3, 6, and 9. Under the new provincial benchmarks program, teachers and school boards would be expected to use a variety of assessment methods - including tests, written work by students, teacher's observations, and student self-assessment - to determine whether students were achieving expected standards.

A new form of student evaluation in terms of comprehensive achievement profiles would include information from all these sources. (Manzer, 1994, p. 240)

In the Ontario context, concerns of a racial and ethno-cultural variety were a relatively new dimension in the excellence/equity debate, one that publicly surfaced in policy circles in the 1990s, and one that provoked conflict within RCOL without any real reconciliation of the issue.

The secondary schools issues were pursued in an iterative fashion over a number of months, in tandem with a multitude of other issues. The two-sidedness of the purposes debate was also carried over to the secondary school debate, one in which advocacy of progressive educational/ethical liberal ideology, and deviation from it, were critical aspects of this debate.

The discussion about secondary curriculum issues interested some commissioners more than others. For example, Caplan became impressed in his visits by schools that in his eyes maximized creativity and promoted individual student freedom, a factor he attributed less to the nature of the curriculum than to the quality of the teacher and the values the school upheld; curriculum issues did not capture all of his attention for this reason. Bégin saw secondary issues conceptually as the biggest problem the commissioners would address, as she noted the lack of "purposefulness" and of "flexibility" concerning her reading of secondary issues; Caplan found the issue "intractable," being interconnected with a host of work- and education-related issues.

Notes: June 30 - Caplan: It's an intractable problem, the secondary problem is connected to community colleges, universities and the world of work, the whole world has to work together to change it... We have to write about this. Bharti: If there is one diploma it
should mean that all can do the work...defining a high minimum. She says her school in Cornwall has four levels of difficulty. Murphy: Why does everything have to be within the school system? Béggin: I would individualize the process as much as possible... We need to find some middle ground... Can we not introduce applied learning in some form? A researcher: We should be tough on principles and soft on means, to allow for experimentation. Béggin: I've always felt that high schools were the biggest problem. I'm impressed by work of Allan King on this... We still don't have an iron-clad definition of the problem... the lack of purposefulness, the lack of flexibility at the secondary school level.

Issues on the agenda for secondary schooling were the stuff that bedevilled the discussion and planning of secondary school issues over the last two decades, and included curriculum content, languages of instruction, destreaming, two separate programs or two course levels, the degree of choice allowed secondary students, mandatory and optional subjects, credits, the literacy test, provincially-set exams, and the role of subject departments.

The main outside contributor on this issue was Queen's University professor Allan King, who was one of the experts chosen to speak to commissioners on this issue, and who contributed the sole commissioned paper (1995) on this topic, a piece often consulted by the researcher who wrote this section. The main inside contributor to this issue was one researcher who composed most, if not all, of Volume 2 of the Report, "Our Vision for Schools", that addressed curriculum and school organization issues from age 6 to 18 (or K-OAC), as well as special education and assessment. While other RCOL researchers possessed particularly strong experience in curriculum and assessment issues for the secondary panel, their input on these issues was severely constrained by time as the researcher who wrote Volume 2 was away from RCOL for extended periods of time holidaying, and the writing of this section was accomplished in relatively short periods, which made inter-researcher reaction very difficult. Moreover, commissioners' enthusiastic approval of the early drafts of chapters in Volume 2 signalled to other researchers that open debate on some of the more contentious issues was not particularly welcome, and thus the discussion of much of Volume 2 was characterized by a relatively closed-circle of one researcher with the commissioners. (The idea of separate volumes can be traced to this enthusiasm, as commissioners, spurred by Béggin, wanted to "showcase" this section apart from other sections of the Report.) Other draft chapters in other volumes, on the other hand, had been subjected to much more open, hands-on debate among commissioners and researchers. As articulated

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by one researcher (Interview, 1995):

The knowledge base of researchers was not effectively used. I also had expertise in curriculum and teacher education but wasn't invited to give much input on these matters. Much depended on the willingness and time constraints of the researcher with the portfolio. The curriculum portfolio was sealed off from input compared to other chapters. Two other researchers had strong backgrounds in curriculum but they weren't consulted either. The curriculum chapter was too strongly based on Allan King's input; there should have been a range of ideas.

Perhaps more than any other section of the Report, the sections that dealt with curriculum issues prompted a type of commissioner deference to one researcher's preferences at least partly because of the somewhat complex and technical nature of the issues, compared with some of the more "accessible" topics at hand. I sensed that the non-expert backgrounds of the co-chairs played a major role in how this debate was handled, and that some hard questions that needed to be addressed on these issues did not get posed because the co-chairs were not aware of some of the foundations of the debate and because the development of alternative views was not encouraged to be weighed against those of the researcher writing this section and those of Allan King who was the main outside consultant.

In the internal debate on secondary school issues Bégin undertook to launch discussion on vocational education. This topic got nowhere, as other commissioners, with the exception of Murphy, were either not interested in the topic or considered such education a form of streaming. Vocational education, to Bégin, had taken on the connotations of a "dirty word." Manzer (1996, p. 25) classifies the interest in vocational training as a theme of liberal conservatives who put great store in "the acquisition of vocational knowledge and skill relevant for work in technological society." What Bégin and Murphy were interested in exploring was "providing program[s] of vocational training, which make different demands on the intellectual abilities of students, starting in upper secondary school and extending into post-secondary technical colleges and cooperative arrangements" (Manzer, 1996, p. 25). The problem these commissioners faced in promoting vocational education was equivalent to closing the barn door after the horse had bolted. In Ontario, the last serious attempt to establish separate programs for arts and science, business and commerce, and vocational training within "multilateral" schools was the Robarts Plan in 1961 (Manzer, 1994, p. 110). The Plan foundered after most students elected for the arts and science stream and was largely abandoned. The Hall-Dennis
Committee condemned separate streaming of this type as segregation along class lines and ruinous to equality of opportunity. In the 1960s, Ontario established community colleges for vocational students, a topic outside the commissioners' mandate, but something of a stigma was attached to some of their programs which did not require high marks for admission. H.S. 1, almost a decade after the Robarts Plan, instituted the credit system, an initiative that undermined for the coming decades any programmatic approach to curricular organization. Allan King's (1995, p. 192) advice to the commissioners on the school-to-work connection suggested that any attempt to revive vocational schooling as a major program would run aground because of intertwined ideological and practical reasons:

...[S]pecialized schools [for vocational training] and formal streaming are socially inappropriate for this province: specialization raises issues of discrimination and stereotyping of ethnocultural groups; the absence of formal ties between education and business/industry limits programming; and, students will not select vocationally-oriented programs in sufficient numbers so as to make such programs viable in most Ontario secondary schools.

Simply put, in Ontario the concept of vocational training had been run into the ground for over a generation, and any attempt to revive it in accordance with Bégin's wishes would have required a massive expenditure of study and energy that other RCOLers would not have supported. Instead, prompted by Glaze, the commissioners recommended that secondary schools beef up their capacities for career education and career counselling and institute school-to-work initiatives (Vol. 2, p.91), a position also supported by King (1995).

Two-sidedness described commissioner positions on most issues concerning secondary school curriculum and organization. One side, supported by Bégin, Bharti, and Murphy, argued that secondary schools needed a curriculum that recognized that students were bound for different destinations, and that courses should be organized on a program basis to reflect this. This position saw competition as a valid value of education and supported accountability, through centralized assessment, to promote quality control. The second position, favoured principally by Glaze and Caplan, argued that quality should be defined as a high standard of literacy and numeracy for the greatest number of students, and that curriculum organization should maximize student choice, and not sort or select students according to destinations. Equity considerations were evoked to justify this
second position. To some extent, the ideological basis of this debate is framed by the convergence of, and opposition of, views that centre on hierarchy and elitism that are particularly invoked when secondary schooling is at issue. The long-established conservative educational ideology "is generally agreed on the inevitability and desirability of educational hierarchy and academic elitism" (Manzer, 1996), a consideration also shared by newer technological liberal concerns of excellence-for-competitiveness. In other words, for conservatives the vertical segmentation of the secondary student body is inevitable, a function of the natural distribution of talents and abilities found in society; for technological liberals this segmentation is vital in order to promote the wealth and stability of society. Countering the view in favour of academic hierarchy and elitism is the strong ethical liberal tradition in Ontario education that rejects programmatic approaches to selecting and sorting students in ways that are perceived to reinforce class, ethnic, or gender bias.

Notes: June 27 - Glaze expresses uneasiness about Bégin's support of the applied learning route. She says it could be seen as another form of streaming in disguised form. Murphy: We have to make [applied courses] sexy and tie them in with community colleges. Glaze: There are still two different streams and I don't like it. It's a form of ghettoization. Murphy: But if people see that there is good recompense at the end?! [Murphy addressing Glaze]: You're dead-ending kids! A researcher: This issue isn't solvable. Glaze wants to see higher level success for more students and doesn't like "slotting kids." Di Cecco: But we need to give kids alternatives...

July 15 - Glaze wants different courses, not separate programs. Let students choose...All kids need better literacy and numeracy. Murphy thinks streaming is acceptable, saying we need different types of literacy and numeracy courses. Glaze [in a heated exchange]: If you want to help disadvantaged kids, give them high levels of literacy and numeracy. [not two separate programs].

Notes: July 19 - Di Cecco: The difficulty is that we are postponing the time when students have to make a decision about destinations; we might want to focus on two destinations, colleges and universities. Murphy: We won't help kids by obfuscating what rewards society has for university graduates; we should speak of appropriate English courses, not different English courses. Caplan: Make destreaming a function of everything else; do it later. Murphy: The federations will oppose destreaming after grade 9. Bharti says she can't recommend destreaming after grade 10.

My observation notes of June 27, 1994 show Glaze and Murphy sparring over an idea that Bégin supported: she would establish two types of programs at the secondary level, one that would be academically-focused and appeal to students who were university-bound, and another that would
be focussed on applied learning, for those students who are community-college or work-bound. Bégin promoted the development of "applied learning" courses, supported by Murphy, as an alternative learning route for the majority of students who do not go on to university (Observation notes, June 30, 1994). Glaze expressed uneasiness about Bégin's support of the applied learning route, calling it "another form of streaming in disguised form...a form of ghettoization." Murphy retorts: "We have to make [applied courses] sexy and tie them in with community colleges...People [should] see that there is good recompense at the end...(to Glaze): "You're dead-ending kids!" This exchange captures in a nutshell the dilemma posed before RCOL: If certain commissioners sided with the idea of separate programs with different content and standards based on differing levels of ability and destinations, they would be accused of promoting elitism and sorting and selecting in ways that reinforce the advantaged. Murphy's retort turns this argument around and maintains that by not explicitly addressing differentiated programming, commissioners would do a great disservice to the majority of students who do not go on to university and for whom a uniform academic orientation of programming invites alienation, irrelevancy, and failure, an argument that is also grounded in notions of fairness and equity. Glaze steadfastly articulated an anti-programmatic stance, as the debate ensued over the summer months: "If you want to help disadvantaged kids, give them high levels of literacy and numeracy, [not two separate programs]" (Observation notes, July 15, 1994).

Bégin, Murphy, and Bharti did not think that schools could avoid curriculum and assessment policies that recognized that students were bound for different destinations. This recognition, these commissioners believed, was anchored in the judgment of society and the marketplace, an evocation of the technological liberal understanding of education. As Murphy observed: "We won't help kids by obfuscating what rewards society has for university graduates..." (July 19, 1994). Eventually, the commissioners compromised on this issue, as they did on the purposes of schooling question. Bégin, Murphy, and Bharti won acceptance on the idea of two separate course levels but not for two different programs. These were embodied in the proposal that beyond grade nine Ontario Academic Courses (OAcCs) would be offered with "an academic emphasis" and required for university entrance, while Ontario Applied Courses (OApCs) would be offered with an emphasis on application and linked to the entrance requirements for community colleges, with a number of courses such as Family Studies and Physical Education as common courses with no special designation. While the nomenclature for
the two new course levels came from the researcher writing this piece, the idea for one or two courses based on level of difficulty and common courses like Family Studies, to replace the current three streams, was based on King (1995, p. 207). But the language of the Report (Vol.2, pp. 79-82) went to convoluted lengths to explain that the two course levels were not to be construed as advocating two levels of difficulty, nor were they to be seen as two different programs; rather the exposition reinforced the idea that all students should choose from both types of courses, a discussion no doubt promoted by internal sensitivity that equated separate programming and levels of difficulty with streaming and discrimination.

The issue of centralized assessment was also on the agenda, an idea that Radwanski had supported (1987), and an initiative much supported in the public hearings. Caplan was least enthusiastic about the concept: he thought that the teacher was the best judge of student performance, a stance supported by the teacher federations in the hearings. Caplan perceived centralized assessment as a particular hobby-horse of Quality Education reformers; given his obvious distaste for their agenda, this meant that this issue would receive little support from his corner. Glaze wanted board-based educators to have a greater role in assessment, and students to play a role in the evaluation of teachers. These two proposals were not supported by her colleagues. The position of Bégin, Murphy, and Bharti eventually won out on assessment, that some form of centralized assessment at the provincial level was necessary to promote educator accountability, and to promote more consistent assessment and standards in general, especially for secondary students, across the province.

That the commissioners decided to recommended some form of centralized assessment was an endorsement of output-related criteria for the evaluation of the system. In the realm of public services such as education, this endorsement can be viewed as a response to a wider demand of public accountability:

...In a democracy managers and producers of public services are expected to be accountable for their performance to those who consume their services and to those who pay for them, or to their political representatives. Accountability cannot be enforced without adequate standards of performance, but these are difficult to define. Traditional input criteria...may be sufficient for purposes of oversight, but cannot satisfy the growing demand to state accountability in terms of outputs and to reward those who produce more efficiently. (Majone, 1989, p. 178)

The arguments of Nagy (1995) in his commissioned paper were frequently cited by RCOLers to justify
the need for some type of centralized assessment. King (1995, p. 204) had recommended a grade 12 external testing program in English, mathematics, and science; RCOL (Vol. 2, p. 154) recommended universal "literacies" testing for grades 3 and 11. The concept of "literacies" in language, math, and science was enthusiastically championed by Caplan, in particular, as was the idea of a "literacy guarantee" to be provided by schools.

The idea of a centralized assessment agency, to be independent of MET, was also on the agenda at an early stage, as the suggestion of a researcher who saw a conflict of interest in MET's proposed role as curriculum developer and assessor. Minister Cooke had also communicated to commissioners his support for a centralized agency, although he did not address its independent nature. This idea won quick acceptance within RCOL, but as recommended (Vol. 2, p. 154), the Office is conceived as a temporary project of a five- to seven-year duration, until "the process [of assessment] is well-established in the school system and in the public consciousness."

Notes: May 18 - Commissioners talk about the Agency, the proposed centralized agency for student assessment, and the College of Teachers. Murphy wants better structuring of the discussion on accountability and asks the researcher who provided the discussion paper to provide a better "road map". Glaze: Is there a role for the provincial auditor [in educational accountability]? No!" exclaims Bégin! Glaze wants secondary students to have the chance to evaluate teachers but the other commissioners don't agree; she also wants a provincially-standardized report card, and others think this a good idea. Bégin: I'm still a little bit lost on accountability and assessment.

July 6 - Caplan favours Scarborough Board of Education assessment specialist Lorna Earl's suggestion, [in a commissioned paper (1995)], that teacher-based assessment be the key area to accentuate. [Earl would later be appointed director of the assessment agency by Cooke as part of his New Foundations initiatives.] Bégin: But if the whole world is going in the direction of large scale assessment, then politically it should be done, but not overdone. Caplan calls for the "Kentucky model" of assessment, [spoke about by a researcher who had met with officials there], but with smaller numbers and less clout. Glaze favours focussing on district-level accountability/assessment, but the rest of commissioners want it centralized at the Ministry level.

RCOL also recommended that a provincially-set exam represent 25 per cent of a students' OAC final mark. When the researcher who wrote this section tried to withdraw this recommendation, she was supported by Caplan but opposed by Bharti and Murphy who successfully argued that such an exam would promote greater province-wide consistency in assessment for students on the cusp of
leaving OAC and for whom marks matter greatly for the determination of their immediate futures.

Questions such as departmental structures and the credit system also fuelled a lively debate within RCOL, one that is characterized by an equal measure of principles and pragmatism, and in some cases, perhaps by a lack of knowledge or conviction. Glaze advocated knocking down departmental structures and integrating subject orientations at the secondary level; Caplan opposed her and other commissioners sided with him on this issue, but commissioners, prodded by Glaze, did recommend a reduction of department heads and the grouping of cognate subjects into unified departments. Glaze also wanted principals to have the power to determine if a student's credits were sufficient for graduation and whether certain courses could be repeated. Bégin was forceful in rebutting this notion, insisting that this should be a provincially-prescribed issue, and this latter position held. The final position on credits and their weighting taken by RCOL (Vol. 2, p. 84) was similar to that advocated by King (1995, p. 204): twenty-one credits required for the graduation diploma (or 12-13 required courses) with an emphasis on English/communications (or francais) (3 credits), math and science (2 credits), and another language (2 credits), for a total of nine credits; two levels of courses and a number of common courses; and a Grade 12 external testing program.

Notes: July 19 - Departmental structures. Glaze would like to abolish the departmental structure at the secondary level and the researcher, who is writing this section, agrees. Caplan: Avis's people [the principals she had just earlier invited to speak at RCOL] wanted to destroy departments. Caplan, however, supports a second researcher's contention about maintaining the differences between elementary and secondary school cultures. Murphy concurs: I don't recommend knocking down departments.

Credits: Glaze: Let principals decide the number of credits, mandatory credits, and whether courses should be repeated. Bégin: No! We should establish rules of the game, and include the number of credits that may be taken beyond the maximum: 21 maximum credits, plus 3 additional ones. Glaze: We should eliminate spares. Bharti: Don't eliminate them; some students abuse them but put spares in a study hall format.

Assessment. The researcher who is writing this section wants to withdraw the recommendation for [the provincially-set] 25 percent exam score for secondary courses from her earlier draft. Bharti says such an exam is good for accountability of teachers, and to curb mark inflation from one school to the next. Murphy concurs. Literacy test at the end of Grade 12: all commissioners agree but Murphy wants, in addition, a math/numeracy test. Caplan: [But] you can't guarantee consistency. Murphy: Does one abandon the search [for consistency] because there's no one consistency? On this topic, Murphy refers to Philip Nagy's commissioned paper (1995) to buttress his argument.
Post-Report critics from academe zeroed in on two major issues in Volume 2 that several researchers raised internally for consideration, without much effect. Both Barrow (1996) and Daniels (1996) noted that the discussion of curriculum in the Report was driven by a conception of learning as "skill acquisition," "critical thinking," and "active learning," the view that emphasizes process (how to learn) over content (what to learn). What kinds of understandings are most important to develop in individuals, or the content of the curriculum, is at best only superficially addressed in Volume 2. The public hearings had alerted commissioners to the issue of process versus content, most often presented in the context of the perceived deficiencies of progressive, child-centred ideology in Ontario public education. Commissioners' motivation in not tackling this issue directly may partly reside in the bias against the chief messengers of this issue in the hearings, mainly, but not exclusively, Education Reform or Quality Education groups. But the main reason why this particular focus on process and skills acquisition pervaded Volume 2 was that, on this general topic, the commissioners decided to defer to the judgment of the researcher whose views on teaching and learning were wholeheartedly consistent with the tenets of progressive, child-centred education. Other views that challenged this perspective, on this topic, were simply not welcomed, or were dealt with as marginal concerns.

There are other examples of issues on which some researchers would have preferred to see greater internal debate. Many presenters in the hearings had scathing criticisms of the draft Common Curriculum (neither "common" nor a "curriculum" stated one sceptic) and other presenters were not impressed by the recent Transition Years initiative for grades 7 - 9 ("neither challenging nor differentiated enough", many opined). Other presenters had negative opinions about the recently-destreamed grade nine that organized grade nine along the elementary model, despite the fact that most grade nine classes are physically situated in secondary schools ("poorly implemented and unfair to all students" was commonly heard). These three relatively recent educational policies had a large impact on secondary school issues and within RCOL a few researchers would have welcomed opening up these topics for discussion. But the researcher writing this section decided not to probe these topics and hence very little debate took place within RCOL about calling into question their validity.
Consequently, these recent MET policy initiatives would pose a substantial barrier to any radical attempt to reorganize secondary schooling, and the secondary school pieces built on their foundations, rather than eliminating them, the lobbying of several researchers to reexamine these issues notwithstanding. Introducing these topics for discussion would have been difficult in any case, and while they could have been subjected to a critique in theoretical and philosophical terms, in the empirical context a more grounded critique would have been highly problematic. Like other bits and pieces of the educational terrain in Ontario, little in the way of hard data could have been mustered to argue for or against the issues surrounding the Transition Years and destreaming, and their relative newness inclined commissioners to take a "wait and see" attitude. The Common Curriculum, for all the criticism directed at it, was also in the draft stage and presented a moving target as to its content and impact. Although the Report (Vol. 2, p. 55) did criticize the Common Curriculum’s learning outcomes as too "numerous and vague," the basic approach of integrated learning strands and an outcomes-based emphasis were not called into question; rather, the Report urged its acceptance as the basic structuring policy for Kindergarten to Grade 9. Putting these issues on the agenda for a thorough internal discussion would have signalled that a complete review of middle and secondary schooling was necessary, something that the commissioners had neither time nor interest in, as myriad other topics were demanding their attention.

The above issue of researcher impact on the treatment of curriculum and school organization confirms the findings by Simeon (1987) who found that what knowledge is generated, and what knowledge is excluded in commission research, is in large measure defined by the backgrounds of the researchers and which disciplines shape the lenses through which policy problems are attended. One should add to this mix the professional ideology of a researcher as a powerful lens.

The Debate on Choice

The issue of choice as presented here raises interesting questions about the willingness and capacity of the publicly-funded educational system to accommodate the interests of minorities. The accommodation of religious and language minorities in public education was entrenched in the Constitution Act, 1867, a basic reflection of the conflict and compromise that led to Confederation. A recurring general problem for post-Confederation provincial policy-making has been the inclusion
of minority interests in public schooling that were not enshrined foundationally as entrenched rights and later shielded from Charter-based challenge. The exercise of some mode of public choice within provincial educational systems as a means of honouring non-rights-based claims has a long if spotty history in Canada, woven around traditional concerns such as language and religion, but ethnicity also crops up here and there as an issue. With the advent in the 1970s of multiculturalism as an officially-endorsed policy supported by all levels of government and in public school systems, and with the changed immigration policies that substantially altered Canadian demographics in large urban areas, the challenges to minority accommodation have of late become much more complex and demanding.

Recent conflicts and policy developments, according to Manzer (1994, p.188), can be traced to how school systems interpret their mandates and responsibilities for an increasingly diverse student population. One of these policy developments is the focus of inclusivity, "giving equal respect to all students regardless of their religion, language, or ethnicity." The other policy development is connected to the idea of community, that "because membership is a good for individuals, public education in a liberal community must provide for the education of young people in their various cultural communities, for example, by extending state aid to minority-denomination and minority-language schools." Within RCOL the discussion of the choice option for Black-focus schools and religious-funding of non-Roman Catholic schools revolved around the twin issues of inclusivity and community, and whether some form of accommodation could be made to these specific communities for the establishment of publicly-funded yet community-distinct forms of schooling. Three big questions raised by critics of minority accommodation during the public hearings, and that played a role in internal discussions on this issue, regard: Just how elastic is the public education system's resource base and its institutional integrity? To what degree can minority interests be advanced without compromising the general socialization and enculturation goals of schooling? And what types of minority adjustment may be construed as antithetical to the core values of public education, and as ultimately divisive?

In addition to the discussion of the choice issue for Black-focus and religious-choice schools, a choice option that was discussed within RCOL was the issue of charter schools, although compared to the religious schools and Black focus issues it was more or less dismissed without much debate. In principle, Caplan (Orbit, p.4) was least disposed to the consideration of a choice option for charter-
type schools, viewing them as a threat to public education as a public good, and an option that only the advantaged could take advantage of: "[E]ducation is explicitly a public good. If you have an inadequate school...or school system, the answer is not to leave it [and go to] charter schools; the answer is to raise all schools."

Black-focus schools

Choice as a value has a distinct emphasis on collective rights in Canada as opposed to the American understanding; in the U.S., the choice option is wedded to the notion of individual rights, and in Canada it is closely identified with the values of community and equity, not liberty (Lawton, 1991). Historically in Canada the idea of choice has been applied to protecting the rights of some identifiable subgroup of which the major variables are religion and language, not "race, class, or gender" (Mawhinney, 1993, pp. 325-326). A major aspect of public choice deliberated by RCOL went beyond the usual perimeters of language and religion and into the realm of race or ethnicity.

Specifically, the topic under discussion was the consideration of establishing public funding for what are called, alternately, Black focus, African-centred, or Inclusive schools. Particularly in the Greater Toronto Area, the number of black students perceived as not succeeding in secondary schooling led a number of community presenters such as Lennox Farrell to argue that Black focus schools were the only remedy to restore self-esteem and achievement among a segment of the population that was not seen to thrive in mainstream schools that perpetuate systemic racism and a denial of minority cultures (Black Action Defence Committee, 1993). The consideration of Black focus schooling within RCOL was influenced by Stephen Lewis's "Report on Race Relations" (1993) that found evidence of systemic racism in Ontario and recommended a number of public sector initiatives, a stance that found favour with Caplan and Glaze in particular. The advocacy of a RCOL researcher and the views of O.I.S.E. professor George Dei, who wrote a commissioned paper for RCOL on this issue (1995), pushed the pro-Black focus position forward within RCOL deliberations, although not without opposition. Some current research by the Toronto Board of Education by Cheng et al. (1991), that showed black students' achievement levels and graduation percentages were worthy of concern, was added to the mix of documents, as well as a similar study by the North York Board of Education (1993) that painted a less grim picture. Circulating within RCOL in the few months before closure was
brought to this issue was the rumour that the North York Board of Education was planning to announce that, in areas where black numbers warranted, proposals for Black-focus schools would be considered by the Board. In the lifetime of RCOL, this rumour never panned out, yet rumours also play a part in such debates.

Like all other value questions, both issues of choice had their advocates and critics within RCOL. For Black-focus schools, Caplan and the researcher for with ethno-cultural matters were the main advocates, and Glaze emerged as a late convert to the idea. Their argument for such an intervention rested largely on one criterion that doubled as the main justification: the relative lack of achievement of large numbers of Black students warranted a drastic response in public policy, one that built on recent American experience. Bégin was the least sympathetic of commissioners for this proposal, fearing that "the seeds of separation" would be sown by such a recommendation. Her scepticism was widely shared by a number of researchers who did not hesitate to voice their opinions on this issue, and by Diana Crosbie, the communications consultant.

Notes: June 14, 1994 - Caplan: Shall we take a crack at choice? Glaze: We should be careful, choice could destabilize the system. Caplan: We can use choice for affirmative action, such as for natives, gender, and race. Murphy says he's in favour of choice as in Shapiro, that we should allow for more permissive legislation. Glaze: We should allow choice for underachievers. A researcher: If you screw up, you get a private school, according to Avis's logic.

June 22 - Caplan supports choice but only for boosting student achievement (affirmative action) in certain communities, such as for black focus. Murphy wants a wider concept of choice, mentioning Shapiro again. Bégin doesn't like black focus, she says it contains the seeds of separation. Glaze: But it's an act of desperation by the black community and there's some evidence that such schools work. Di Cecco: It's dangerous to tie it to choice: MET won't like it at all. Call it "alternative schools" instead.

August 18 - Glaze wants more discussion on choice, especially black focus, and insists that much more reference be made in the Report to Stephen Lewis's findings. Bégin to Glaze: No, I don't give my blanket approval to that report! Glaze wants black-focus schools at the elementary, not secondary level. Caplan: Yes, write it up this way.

Much of the internal criticism heard in formal internal deliberations and in hallways on Black-focus schools centred on six points: 1) The American legacy of large-scale slavery in southern states, and the post-Civil War pattern of segregation in southern and northern states, hardly compares with
the historical development of Ontario; 2) the lack of hard Ontario-based data to show that the problem was as grave as some advocates insisted it was; 3) the lack of research to indicate that such an intervention would lead to better student achievement; 4) the segregationist connotations that could easily be attached to such a notion; 5) the knowledge, obtained from the hearings, that not all black groups and individuals by any means accepted this intervention as welcome; and 6) the feeling that other groups, such as faith-based communities, that had been lobbying for 25 years for a choice option, had a stronger claim for public choice, based on the historical and constitutional development of education in Ontario, and that if the commissioners were not willing to validate this claim, then by the same logic, they should not sanction black-focus schools.

Caplan was instrumental in writing the piece around the recommendation for Black-focus schools, and despite commissioner and researcher misgivings about the recommendation, was pivotal in seeing that it got to the Report-writing stage. Two events, media-related in different ways, intervened to cause Caplan to rethink his position to the point where the recommendation was withdrawn and replaced with a much watered-down recommendation for black-focus programs in "demonstration schools" where numbers of students warranted such a policy. The first of these events was the current media criticism of a proposed "diversion" program for black youth who had transgressed the law, in particular the criticism from those naysayers at the Toronto Star sympathetic to equity-related issues, that a race-based approach was segregationist in conception, patronizing in intent, and inimical to the rule of law. This media coverage generated much internal discussion by those RCOLers still on board at headquarters.

November 9 - *Bégin and Caplan* have independently re-worked the section recommending black-focus schools in light of uproar in the press caused by the Ontario Attorney General's plans for a "diversion program" for black youth in trouble with the law. Thomas Walkom, a columnist with the Toronto Star sometimes sympathetic to the NDP Government, condemns this plan as racist, and Michael Valpy, the noted "Red Tory" columnist of the Globe, gives his conditional support as long as other communities are offered similar programs.

The second event to counter the apparent consensus on the recommendation for Black-focus schools was the forceful intervention of the communications consultant Diana Crosbie, who predicted an even larger uproar in the media if the recommendation went through. Because Crosbie was a non-
participant in internal discussions, her only way of knowing that this recommendation was on tap was wading through the complete draft of the Report, available only late in the fall of 1994, and to make matters worse, the recommendation for black-focus schools was situated several hundred pages deep on the inside of it. By the time she reached the recommendation, she had only a few days to dissuade Caplan as the printing date for that section was imminent. Her contention was that the black-focus recommendation would be played out in the media with a headline that would read: "RCOL Recommends School Segregation." Although Crosbie did not get Caplan to change his mind at that moment, she did prompt the very angry co-chair to seek further advice on the wisdom of the recommendation, and as the following paragraphs show, he withdrew the recommendation for black-focus schools and approved the rewriting of this section.

December 6 - Yesterday, Diana Crosbie, the communications consultant, visited Caplan at RCOL and, I'm told, lambasted him over the recommendation for black focus schools, saying the headline in the newspaper would read "RCOL supports school segregation". Evidently, she kept up her argument until Caplan told her literally to shut up.

December 7 - The big news today: Caplan and Bégin are rethinking the black focus concept, after being prodded by Crosbie. Caplan, I'm told, had checked with some outsiders and has come to the conclusion that the support for "BFS" was not all that he was led to believe. This afternoon the BFS recommendation has been changed to recommending some Black Focus "programs." Two researchers were asked to rewrite some of argumentation for this, but are not allowed to change much of the wording, and the language seems ambiguous. Di Cecco advises us to leave it alone, that pushing for clarification with the co-chairs at this stage might lead to a blowup.

In the pre-Crosbie confrontation, October 11, 1994, draft of the chapter on "Religious, Language, Ethno-Cultural and Racial Minorities," (p.28), the recommendation for Black or African-centred schools read:

[W]e recommend that MET state its support for the establishment of Afro-Centred Schools within the publicly funded school system in areas of Ontario where there is support from African Canadian parents/communities and that appropriate school boards in those areas establish the Schools in partnership with local African Canadian parents/communities.

In post-Crosbie confrontation, the printed edition of the Report (Vol.4, p.95), the text of the amended recommendation 141 read:

We recommend that in jurisdictions with large numbers of black students, school boards,
academic authorities, faculties of education and representatives of the black community collaborate to establish demonstration schools and innovative programs based on best practices in bringing about academic success for black students.

The wording around the recommendation was changed around by researchers twice to try to clarify that this was not to be construed as an endorsement of Black-focus schools, but the executive director, perhaps fearing the wrath of Caplan, instructed them to leave well enough alone, as an extensive re-writing would require reopening the discussion, which at this stage was inviting both an explosive conflict (tempers were well-frayed at this stage), and a delaying of the printing date.

The ambiguousness of the meaning of this amended recommendation later led to some news media reporting that RCOL had indeed opted for Black-focus schools. In a lengthy article entitled "The color of learning" the Star's Andrew Duffy (Feb.11, 1995, p. B1) equated RCOL's recommendation for "demonstration schools" and for race-based student achievement reporting with support for black-focus schools, contending that the Report "revives the idea of black schools" (p. B4). A Star editorial in the same issue (p. A28) was unequivocal in its denunciation of the idea of demonstration schools which it equated with establishing black-focus schools:

Confronted with what it called "a crisis among black youth with respect to education and achievement," the Royal Commission on Learning has recommended black-focussed "demonstration schools" in areas with large numbers of black students. Rather than help, it only will aggravate the problem.

...Dismal as that picture [of black student achievement] is, the solution does not lie in segregation...

Rather than taking the pressure off the mainstream classroom, Education Minister Dave Cooke should be directing resources to the students who need the help and direction. And he should be ensuring that our education system is cleansed of discrimination.

In the final analysis, then, RCOL's ambiguity on this issue had incited precisely the criticism that Crosbie had envisaged, that RCOL was calling for schools that were segregated by race. For his part, Cooke was unequivocal in rejecting both the notion of race-based achievement statistics and the call for demonstration schools, either as recommended by RCOL or as depicted by Black-focus school advocates.

Like the religious choice issue within RCOL (below), choice as Black-focus schools was

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settled by neither consensus nor gentle reason and logic. Rather, the matter was brought to head and closure imposed upon it because of the tenacious and emotional opposition of an individual to the concept.

Choice and Public Funding to Religious Schools

For RCOL, the idea of choice was important in consideration of public funding for non-Catholic religious schools, a conception that has its antecedents in the Constitutionally-influenced understanding of the importance of the value of religion in the socialization and identification of citizens; this position was advanced by numerous religious choice groups in the public hearings. In the 1980s the basic thrust of this argument was that the present system that accorded religion-based education rights solely to Roman Catholic separate school supporters (under section 93 of the Constitution Act) was discriminatory (under section 15 of the Charter), and that the amelioration of this discrimination could be effected by recognizing the rights of other religious groupings for public education funding. However, a 1987 Supreme Court decision that a Constitution-based challenge to Roman Catholic separate school supporters' rights could not be sustained (Mawhinney, 1993). In the context of RCOL public hearings, this argument, while still grounded in judicial history, moved on to posit the question of religious choice through an appeal to fairness, equity, and a respect for diversity. This argument, moreover, promoted the understanding that the solution to this problem lay not with the final federal court but with the Ontario provincial government, that the ultimate call on this issue was political, not judicial. The political solution sought was some model of religious school accreditation, accountability, and funding that addressed the perceived faults in the recommendations of the 1986 Shapiro Commission (Ontario Multi-Faith Coalition for Equity in Education, 1993). The few discussions on public funding to religious schools were extended over a five-month period, from April through August 1994.

In this debate, I detected a change of attitude among certain commissioners, moving from opposition to the idea of funding for religious schools to conditional support, prompted by Murphy's steadfast and eloquent advocacy and the steady diet of ideas from the Shapiro Report (1985) that Murphy fed to his fellow commissioners. Framing the opposite end of the spectrum on this debate was Caplan, the most vehement and equally-steadfast naysayer.
In the early stages of this debate in April 1994, Caplan, Bégin, and Glaze were unsympathetic to Murphy's proposal to revisit Shapiro (the voice of Bharti is not heard in this debate). Their main fear was that this choice option would open the flood gates of choice in the multicultural context of urban southern Ontario, setting in motion a tide that would sweep away the integrity of the public system. In this debate, the talk gradually moved away from the notion of choice in general, to the specific issue of religious choice, as Murphy took pains to frame the issue in that precise context.

Notes: April 18, 1994 - A researcher asks: Do you want to leave choice as is, as a constitutional issue, or extend it? Bégin: I'm for the status quo. Bégin refers to a Mrs. Chin's presentation, at the Scarborough hearings, urging the recognition of Chinese as the third official language of Ontario and the setting up of publicly-funded Chinese-language schools in Metro Toronto, i.e., choice could open up a political pandora's box. Murphy: Let's take another look at the Shapiro Report. Caplan: The system now offers choice on academic, pedagogical, or ethical grounds. I'm happy to stay there. Bégin: I don't want more fracturing, and Caplan concurs. Murphy: I would like to see more choice as in Shapiro. Caplan to Murphy: Is this your commonwealth, [i.e., sense of wider community]? Di Cecco: People say, "Why not?!"...It's difficult to sustain a monopoly, pressure points in the system are growing. Caplan: There are so many choices: you could have anarchy, [such as] 700 Jewish schools in Toronto.

In June, the national context for choice, particularly British Columbia, was raised by a researcher and Murphy to allay fears that religious choice is necessarily fractious. At that time, Murphy reiterated his support for religious choice, with Bégin promising to look at the Shapiro Report, and Glaze declaring that she was ready to accept limited religious choice within the public system. By August, the debate on religious choice became openly conflictive, as Murphy repeated his proposal and Caplan dug in his heels in opposition even harder. Bégin declared that she was ready to see the wisdom of Murphy's approach, and Glaze was warming to the idea of religious choice under the rubric of respecting diversity.

Notes: June 14 - A researcher: We could look at the British Columbia model of independent schools that allows for funding to various types of schools. Bégin: I haven't read Shapiro yet but I'll look at it, but choice shouldn't erode the public system. A researcher: We could allow for experimentation and choice within public system, with periodic ongoing review, with common testing, and some common curriculum. Di Cecco: If we don't allow choice the pressure will continue to mount. Murphy: All the other provinces have had experience with this type of choice without splintering. Glaze reiterates her fear of fragmentation but adds she's for limited choice but only within the public system.
Notes: August 18 - Murphy wants a Multi-faith Coalition type of recommendation, allowing for the teaching of religious understanding in public schools. (The Coalition, and similar groups in the public hearings, took a position, that if fuller choice was not in the cards, then the provision of some form of religious instruction within public schools should be allowed.) Caplan reacts very strongly against this, saying he will not buy into it, and he animatedly talks about "all the wars," bloodshed, and persecution caused by religion. Nevertheless, Bégin announces that she supports Murphy's position, and Glaze maintains that RCOL needs a wider definition of choice to support diversity.

In September, Murphy sent RCOLers a lengthy E-mail advancing his argument for wider religious choice, tying in his proposal with argumentation made in the draft Report about respecting diversity and about the hidden curriculum, both areas that Caplan had a large role in framing. A consensus was in the making, with one very uneasy co-chair as dissenter.

Notes: September 14 - Big e-mail from Murphy today on the question of choice, two and a quarter single-spaced pages. He argues that the draft Report says that race, gender, language, and culture are not deficits, and that this argumentation was central to the Purposes section, and that the characteristics that the child brings to school are to be respected. The Report, he says, also provides an explanation for inclusive special education because it is the parents' wishes to mainstream them. It seems logical, he adds, "if the child or parent or group of parents suggests a school, a class, or subject that touches upon the values of their religious heritage and tradition, that students be given the option of taking such a course or subject, or even of going to an alternative school which emphasizes the values of such a religious tradition throughout its curriculum".

From another angle, Murphy says that if the hidden curriculum (also dealt with in Purposes in a section written by Caplan) honours all manner of diversity but is silent on religious values then it conveys "...that this is something alien to the domain of education" and that the values the system can promote are exclusively secularist. He notes the growth of private schools over the past few years and suggests that part of this growth reflects the exercising of a choice option on religious values. He does not agree that such funding would imperil the public system, as several provinces have such provisions and still have strong public systems. He recommends multi-faith classes in Roman Catholic and public schools, denominational classes as recommended by various faith groups, and alternative schools as recommended by the Shapiro report, under the aegis of the public system and funded only for operational costs.

Two days after Murphy's E-mail, the commissioners discussed the religious choice issue for the last time, at one of the last, and one of the more extraordinary commissioners' meetings that I attended over the duration. By now, all commissioners except Caplan were voicing their support for a limited
religious choice option. Caplan, pushed into a corner, threatened a minority report that would open the whole question of funding, including an ultimate piece of political dynamite, the question of general funding for Roman Catholic schools. Almost one year and a half earlier, in the spring of 1993, the commissioners had agreed that no minority reports would be allowed, and that the Report should reflect a consensus. Murphy retorted to Caplan's tactic by informing him, in a rare show of half-hidden anger, that the latter's action was "blackmail."

Notes: September 16 - Bégin wants to accommodate Murphy's position, but does not support full choice, as it is too divisive. Glaze supports Murphy's position, if these choice schools are under the aegis of public system, and such schools can't turn away students, if a small percentage of teachers is not in the particular faith community, and if such schools accept some hard-to-serve students.

**Caplan:** This is unacceptable to me: public boards should not teach religion. I will write a minority report or otherwise open up whole issue of funding for denominational schools including Roman Catholic schools...It's a tough issue: why don't we say it's a political issue and leave it at that?

**Murphy:** This is blackmail: Catholic education is a privilege, and this privilege should be shared. There's more than logic behind this. Murphy further objects to Caplan's observations that such schools/courses promote religious intolerance.

**Bégin:** People need spiritual values but I detest religious wars. Bégin says she can live with the status quo but would prefer a secular system. Choice is a value, she adds, and should be mentioned in the Purposes chapter. This is the only area of choice where we haven't come to a conclusion. The Report should reflect our ambivalent attitudes.

As a tactic it worked for Caplan, and the issue was not raised again. Caplan, after all, had implicitly invoked the cardinal house rule that was also at play in the black-focus issue: Accommodate a preference in general cases, but if a particular issue is abundantly contested for a sustained period, particularly by a co-chair, it shall not pass. The threatening of a minority report, and a possible assault on the constitutionally-secured rights to public funding for separate school education, were the equivalent of a swashbuckler dropping two gloves to provoke a duel, in case the eyepatched gentleman in front of him missed the descent of the first one. The evidence of this rule's invocation did not lie in the paltry and passing reference on this issue in the Report; the banality of its discussion did not reflect how conflictive the religious choice issue had become within RCOL.

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CORE VALUES IN THE REPORT

The consensus on explicit values that emerged in the final version of the Report included some agreement on excellence/quality (intellectual goals foremost), equity, accountability, and community and in the background, security and liberty. In most cases, this consensus is more of a reflection of accommodation, equivocality, and non-resolution of value conflict among commissioners than a statement of collectively agreed-upon values whose meanings were shared by commissioners. Religious choice and efficiency were important to some commissioners and researchers, but the Report cannot be said to be imbued with their meanings, with Caplan playing a major role in downplaying their discussion. Murphy was closely identified with the promotion of community and religious choice; equity and ethno-cultural issues were special concerns of Caplan and Glaze; and Bégin, Bharti, and Murphy were the most consistent advocates for excellence. The Report may be seen as a balance between a view of schooling as a centre for learning and as a centre for attending to broadly-defined needs of students, and a balance between the needs of internal stakeholders and the expectations of those traditionally not in the decision-making loop, as well as being the affirmation of a public good. The hearings, and numerous special meetings of the commissioners with immigrant/minority groups and the youth outreach strategy, demonstrated the commissioners' commitment to inclusion in a multicultural fashion and respect for diversity.

That the commissioners did not articulate the purposes of education in line with the excellence-for-competition scenario of technological liberalism would suggest, in Paquette's framework (1995), that this educational ideology's "lock" on policy documents in the 1990s is not unchallenged, but RCOL's inattention to efficiency and the dollars and cents behind recommendations was seen by the same author as a major weakness of the Report. For Paquette (1996), the most "revolutionary" and "radical" recommendations were those related to the equity-driven proposals for redistributing tax revenues and the centralized funding model (pp. 153-154). For representatives of public school boards, these funding proposals were also deemed revolutionary and threatening; while the lack of a recommendation for amalgamation addressed their security needs, the recentralization of core functions to the Ministry level would further their perception that the thrust of RCOL recommendations meant the redistribution of decision-making power in the system was at the (larger) boards' expense. For Roman Catholic and smaller and rural boards the funding proposals were
answered prayers, and francophones would not find much fault with pronouncements on governance that matched their agenda. On the other hand, a radical socialist like Martell (1996) viewed these same recommendations as a reactionary imposition of centralized and bureaucratized authority, and an assault on the equity-related spending of large urban boards, a viewpoint shared by the OSSTF executive (1995). Martell (1996) viewed the recommendation for information technology as a selling out to corporate interests, and an undermining of public values, and not the potent learning tool that commissioners envisaged. From a radical socialist perspective Delhi (1995) portrayed the recommendations around a wide membership base for school councils as anti-democratic (purportedly skewing the decision-making process in favour of the advantaged and corporate interests). Delhi's views provide a contrast to those of Manzer (1996) who saw advisory councils as a mechanism for participatory democracy.

This comparison could go on and on, but the main point here is that divining the meaning in the value configuration of the Report is a subjective exercise, coloured by differing interests and by contested political philosophies. This is also an exercise that is best gauged when values are not at the level of sloganistic abstraction but are manifested in specific recommendations that affect various components, and decision-making levels, of the publicly-funded educational system differently.

From Manzer's framework (1994; 1996), RCOL's Report is an infusion of technological liberal, ethical liberal, and radical communitarian ideas into the still-robust corpus of an ethical liberal ideology of public education whose hegemonic status was bruised but not broken, at least on paper. That this challenge to hegemony was at least partially successful is attributable to the growing self-mobilization primarily of outside stakeholders. This was an emerging voice of the 1990s that the commissioners could not reject but only interpret. Although commissioners took pains to distance themselves from the symbolism and the vocabulary of the Hall-Dennis Report, RCOL's Report represents no paradigm shift away from child-centred progressivism. RCOL co-chairs, commissioners, and some key researchers were not so nearly inclined to view the legacy of Hall-Dennis in as negative a light as were quality education reform groups or editorial writers of The Globe and Mail. Instead what commissioners sought to do, prodded by the movement for accountability and excellence, was to chisel off some of the rough edges of the real or imputed Hall-Dennis legacy.

Publicly-funded education in Ontario has often been described in metaphoric terms as "The
House that Ryerson Built.” Critics such as those from quality education reform groups might contend that the post-1960s edifice was constructed by Hall-Dennis and its progressive sponsors in the Ministry of Education, aided and abetted by teacher federations, trustee associations, and faculties of education (Cf. Holmes, 1986; 1991). RCOLers chose not to raze this structure but rather to re-model it. Philosophically, the progressive bias of commissioners spilled over into a sympathy for a progressive educational ideology, and they accepted without too many reservations the advice of a researcher on issues related to curriculum design and school organization that was strongly tinted by a child-centred, progressive approach. Politically, the decision taken by commissioners not to alienate major inside stakeholders and to seek where possible an incrementalist balancing in the power and control of the educational system meant that many status-quo values and ways of doing things would be left unchallenged in RCOL’s Report. In Ontario, leaving the educational status-quo somewhat in tact meant not trying to uproot the educational ideology that Manzer (1994) aptly described as possessing a hegemonic status for a generation.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 have been devoted to exploring various aspects of the main focus of this dissertation, the construction of knowledge within RCOL, and involved the discussion of composition and bias, context, orientation, public consultation, internal deliberations and the writing process, and the construction of values. In the following chapter, I discuss and analyze other major purposes that RCOL served in its brief history.
CHAPTER 7 - THE CONSTRUCTION OF MULTIPLE PURPOSES

In Chapter 7 I pursue the findings on the construction of multiple purposes developed by RCOLers over the course of their activity from May 1993 to January 1995. To provide some context to this discussion I provide a brief overview of media and stakeholder reaction to the Report, as this information is also important in providing the reader with an impression of what the immediate impact of the Commission's labours was as perceived by important players. Next I include a summary of the New Foundations, the Cooke Ministry's bundle of policy initiatives that were released very quickly upon the release of the Report, and I suggest where some of these initiatives build on or deviate from specific RCOL recommendations. The largest part of this chapter pursues the question of what public purposes RCOL achieved.

MEDIA AND STAKEHOLDER REACTION

The first media reaction to some of the key RCOL recommendations preceded by a month the official release of the Report to the government. The leak of some of the recommendations in December 1994 to the media was viewed within RCOL as a politically-motivated act, of possible benefit to the Rae Government. In December 1994, one month before the release of the Report to the Rae Government, someone within RCOL, or someone with knowledge of the main recommendations, leak a summary of them to Elizabeth Payne of the Ottawa Citizen, and the story was reprinted by other newspapers in the Southam chain, and subsequently picked up by other media. Until this time, commissioners and researchers had been careful not to divulge their thinking to anyone outside a small circle. Angry speculation about the culprit, and about the motivation behind the leak, led to accusations within RCOL, and a considerable amount of ill will was generated as a result (Observation notes, December, 1994). Murphy (Interview, 1995) portrayed the leak as politically motivated, "beneficial to the Government's election strategy and it gave them positive publicity." Significantly, the culprit deemed most likely to have "spilled the beans" by certain RCOLers was not the same one that Cooke (Interview, 1996) indicated, in a confidential aside to me, as the perpetrator.

The general response of the media at the time of the leak was favourable to several key
recommendations. Jennifer Lewington of the *Globe* (Dec. 21, 1994, p. A4) wrote that "[RCOL] plans to reform education [are] hailed", for "leaked" recommendations such as a two-year program for teacher education, for a professional college of teachers, for a centralization of curriculum development in provincial hands, for early childhood education, and for community-based school councils. Lewington also speculated that RCOL might not recommend amalgamation, and she was unable to elicit any response from Minister Cooke on this issue. Other stakeholders' spokespersons were more forthcoming, however. Veronica Lacey, Director of the North York Board of Education, and future Deputy Minister of Education and Training, pronounced her support for an arm's length body to audit testing programs, as did Donna Cansfield, president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association. The proposal for ECE received enthusiastic support from Kerry McCuaig, executive director of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care. Liberal education critic Charles Beer indicated support for all the leaked recommendations, saying that they were in line with provincial Liberal Party thinking, but he also noted that the ECE recommendation was "problematic" because of the implied costs. Bill Robson, a director of the Coalition for Education Reform, praised the proposals for centralized curriculum delivery as an antidote to the present diffusion of responsibility. Michael Fullan, dean of the education faculty at the University of Toronto, approved of the two-year program for teacher education, exclaiming that it was "absolutely the right way to go."

Media and stakeholder response in the wake of the release of the Report was also on a positive note, although some scepticism did emerge over the first few weeks of 1995. An editorial in the *Toronto Star* (Jan. 27, 1995, p. A26) was supportive of RCOL's general thrust, but was unhappy that the Commission "balked at proposals to reduce the number of boards and trustees..." The *Star* editorial drew the inevitable comparison of RCOL with Hall-Dennis, portraying the recommendations of the former as an antidote to the latter:

The $3 million, four-volume report gives official voice to the anger and anxiety parents have been expressing for years: that the educational experiment that flowed out of the 1968 Hall-Dennis report - open classrooms, few tests, ambiguous curricula - has been a failure.

An editorial in the *Globe* (Feb. 22, 1995, p. A22) also castigated the legacy of the "child-centred" Hall-Dennis report, but lamented that neither RCOL's recommendations nor Cooke's response to them represented a clear repudiation of a generation of progressive educational policies.
Jennifer Lewington (Globe, Jan. 27, 1995, A1) described the support the general direction of the Report received from Cooke, and the leadership of Liberals and Conservatives, but at the same time she noted that "sparks flew" over the ECE recommendation. In the same edition of the Globe, Rudy Platiel detailed the widespread support for the Report from important stakeholders. Paul Bennett, co-chairman of the Coalition on Education Reform, declared that: "The soft and mushy and warm and fuzzy education system that we have had for the last 25 years has been officially brought to an end". "I'm excited" about the Report, said Margaret Wilson, president of the Ontario Teachers' Federation; she would soon be appointed by Cooke as the first head of the Ontario College of Teachers. Shelagh O'Connor, policy analyst with the Metro Board of Trade declared that the Report addressed the main concern of her organization: "accountability by the ministry, the schools, [and] the teachers". Patrick Meany, president of the Ontario Catholic Separate School Trustees Association, declared his organization's support for the recommendations impacting on Catholic education.

On the other hand, some recommendations met with a mixed reception from the side of teacher federations, from big city school boards, as well as from labour and media pundits. Liz Barkley, president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation, decried the proposal for a College of Teachers, reiterating OSSTF's opposition to an idea that former Minister Bette Stephenson tried to introduce a decade ago, claiming that it would "create a whole new bureaucracy" that would be costly to implement and that she saw as a threat to union power (Globe, Jan. 27, 1995). Other teacher federation spokespersons were less critical of the proposed College, however, and welcomed the attention paid by RCOL to teacher education and professional development, including Claire Ross representing the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and Sheryl Hosizaki, vice-president of the Federation of Women's Teachers Associations of Ontario (The Toronto Star, Jan. 27, 1995, p. A11). Anne Vanstone, chairperson of the Metro Toronto Board of Education [and later appointed by Minister Snobelen, along with former Minister Cooke to the two-person Education Improvement Commission in 1997], declared her support for the four engines recommended by RCOL (ECE, teacher education and professionalism, community education, and information technology), but was unhappy with the proposal to centralize more authority at the provincial level. Jim Turk, education director for the Ontario Federation of Labour, denounced the Report as "contradictory and ultimately not very satisfactory", and he contended its call for empowering principals, for direct business
involvement in community councils, and an emphasis on expensive information technology reflects "a business vision of schools as a corporate form", a viewpoint shared by Star columnist Thomas Walkom (The Toronto Star, Jan. 27, 1995, p.A29).

THE NEW FOUNDATIONS

In a press release issued on January 25, 1995, the day of the release of the Report, Cooke declared that "[w]ithin a couple of weeks we will be able to begin announcing program and policy initiatives in response to the Commission's recommendations." To RCOLers' surprise, this reaction came sooner than later. On February 7, 1995, Minister Cooke announced his intention to implement RCOL recommendations on standardized report cards and creating a province-wide curriculum (The Toronto Star, Feb. 8, 1995, p. A28). One week later he unveiled his plans for the College of Teachers and he mandated school councils for every publicly-funded school in Ontario (The Toronto Star, Feb. 14, 1995 A1). On February 15, Cooke ruled out using student tests tied to race, which had been a RCOL recommendation (The Toronto Star, Feb. 15, 1995, p. A1). On February 21, Cooke announced that RCOL's recommendation for ECE would not be implemented because of its expense, but that additional funding would be forthcoming for an "Early Literacy Fund" and for junior and senior kindergarten (The Toronto Star, Feb. 21, 1995, p. A1). On February 25, Cooke announced his intention to "chop" the number of school boards by fifty percent, a major deviation from RCOL, and to cap the salaries of school trustees (The Toronto Star, Feb. 25, 1995, A1). The full package of Cooke's policy intentions was announced on March 15, 1995, a scant seven weeks after receiving the Report. On that day the Minister sent a memorandum to chairs of school boards and minority language sections outlining his response to RCOL recommendations, the New Foundations for Ontario Education (Cooke, 1995).

The New Foundations document stated that MET would assume responsibility for curriculum development, citing the need to cut duplication of efforts by boards which were spending $30 million on this activity. RCOL had made a similar recommendation, but one year prior in a meeting with the commissioners, Cooke had already announced his preference in this direction. While New Foundations detailed many initiatives on the curriculum and standards front, it was largely silent about much discussion of curriculum and school organization issues in the Report, by far its largest section. The
provincially-standardized report card recommended by RCOL was exported to the New Foundations, and fit well with MET's work on centralizing related elements of curriculum and assessment.

RCOL's recommendation for school councils was also rolled into the New Foundations, with membership composed of parents/guardians (in majority), community representatives, and a student (optional at the elementary level). Given the earlier establishment of the Ontario Parent Council to advise the Minister, and its members' avowed interest in seeing councils mandated at the school level, this initiative was probably in the works without RCOL's advocacy. However, New Foundations did not respond to the basic argumentation RCOL made in justifying the need for councils, i.e., the creation of alliances to deal with student needs that cannot be met by teachers, and how the Government would help to solve this issue.

On the assessment and accountability front, the New Foundations document went further in the direction of province-wide testing than RCOL recommended, with an annual testing program for all students in Grades 3, 6, 9 and 11 in reading, writing and mathematics, based upon province-wide curriculum outcomes and standards. RCOL's recommendation for an Assessment Agency (also on the Minister's agenda one year earlier) was accepted, and steps were undertaken to set up the Education Quality and Accountability Office. Accountability was declared by Cooke to be the fifth engine of his Ministry's initiatives, building upon the other four recommended by RCOL. Glaze's hitherto-thwarted desire to see accountability categorized as an engine had been fulfilled.

On the topic of teacher education, the New Foundations initiatives matched closely the RCOL recommendations. The most important piece was the establishment of Ontario College of Teachers, as the governance body for any educator who holds an Ontario Teaching Certificate. Its executive membership, with a majority of lay members, was more heterogeneous than envisaged by RCOL, including teachers in both English and French language schools, parents, students, and representatives of faculties of education, school boards, the Ministry, and the private sector. Its powers are similar to those described by RCOL: accreditation of teacher education programs, standards of practice, oversight of professional development, and certification. The composition of its executive council is to be more in line with Glaze's preference of more lay control than RCOL's recommendation that the majority should be reserved for teachers and representatives from subject specialist associations. Teacher education programs were to be expanded to two-year programs, another RCOL
recommendation.

For early childhood education, New Foundations included a number of initiatives to ensure early literacy, also a RCOL focus of interest, but did not accept the recommendation for voluntary entry of three-year olds into publicly-funded education. Rather, New Foundations outlined a renewed commitment to improving junior- and senior-kindergarten programs, by creating a phased-in full-day program combined with before- and after-school child care at the same location.

On secondary school reform, the New Foundations agreed with the position of RCOL to eliminate Grade 13, and to reorganize the secondary program to four years commencing after Grade 8, with a province-wide curriculum for Grades 10 to 12 building on the Common Curriculum, Grades 1 to 9. No mention is made about the two different courses recommended by RCOL, academic and applied, although the intention to create better-defined linkages to college, and training and work, might have indicated that such an approach was forthcoming. The RCOL recommendation for secondary programs for enhanced career awareness, educational and career planning was embraced in the New Foundations. No mention is made in the latter document about the secondary school "literacy guarantee" that RCOL recommended.

The New Foundations initiatives on information technology followed the logic of RCOL, emphasizing that computer skills were to be considered part of the "new basics" of the new curriculum. New Foundations committed $500 million over five years for installation, hardware, and software, with $100 million per annum thereafter, to ensure the ultimate goal of one computer per 10 students in Ontario schools. The College of Teachers was mandated with the task of studying and making recommendations for the upgrading of teacher professional skills in this area, and the Education Information Technology Alliance was created to support integration technology from the standpoint of the school system and private sector. Prior to the release of the Report, MET had already signalled its intention for a broad initiative in this area.

New Foundations deviated from RCOL recommendations in pushing for a reduction in the number of school boards in the range of 40 to 50 percent. The RCOL recommendation that trusteeship be considered a part-time position, with a maximum honorarium of $20,000 per year, was accepted, however.

The New Foundations was also faithful to the emphasis that RCOL put on the implementation
process, to which a whole chapter was devoted in the RCOL Report. The Minister announced the
e enlistment of a number of high-profile personalities from the Ontario educational community to head
up or oversee aspects of the New Foundations program, including: Joan M. Green, former Director
of Education for the Toronto Board of Education, as the new head of the Education Quality and
Accountability Office; Margaret Wilson, former President of the Ontario Teachers' Federation, as the
Registrar of the Ontario College of Teachers Implementation Committee; and the School Board
Reduction Task Force, headed up by former Separate School Board Director of Education, John
Sweeney. Michael Fullan, Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Toronto, was
appointed as special advisor to the Minister on implementation matters (MET, 1995).

The silence of the New Foundations document on a number of RCOL Report issues is perhaps
indicative of a lack of "deep reading" of the Report. For example, no response was forthcoming on
the discussion of the Purposes of Education chapter that underscored the importance of intellectual
development as the key function of schools. To give the Ministry the benefit of the doubt on this issue,
the clear signals toward assessment, standards, and excellence outlined in New Foundations, by
inference, suggest that this understanding was implicitly embraced by the Minister. No response,
however, was given to a number of topics that absorbed much of the collective energies of RCOLers,
including the chapters on: Constitutional Issues (Roman Catholic, Francophone, and Aboriginal);
Equity Considerations (Religious minorities, language, ethno-cultural, and racial minorities); and
Funding (to ameliorate the problems of "assessment-poor" boards).

RCOL'S MULTIPLE PURPOSES

Beyond the individual and collective construction of knowledge throughout the hearings,
internal deliberations, and the writing of the Report, RCOL manifested a number of purposes that
should be addressed. I emphasize at this juncture the idea of construction of multiple purposes,
meaning that RCOL, like most policy-oriented commissions (Cairns, 1990), did not start its short life
as an up-and-running "turn-key" public enterprise stocked with a clear mission, strategies, people, or
structure. All of these had to be created, assessed, and maybe tried again, in ad hoc fashion, until they
worked. Public adhocery must be mixed with other factors to make uniqueness a singular characteristic
of commissions, as each is faced with different mandates, time-lines, resources, tasks, task
environments, contexts, and personalities. This uniqueness drives members to construct organizations, and their agendas, to fit their highly-specialized situation. RCOL constructed its multiple purposes also because of need. Simply put, RCOL was thrust into a hostile task environment along several dimensions, and its collective security and survival needs, and the ego needs of its members, pulled RCOLers to respond and adapt to that environment and just as importantly, to in turn influence RCOL's task environment, an interactive capacity that is not limited to ad hoc organizations (Mintzberg, 1979). A commission's uniqueness and arm's-length status may thus provide sufficient organizational slack and incentive for the infusion of multiple purposes, functions, and uses that commission members fashion in order to fulfill a mandate whose meaning is interpreted, adapted, and embellished.

Policy-oriented commissions may perform a number of purposes, functions, and orientations: exercise fidelity to governmental intent or diverge sharply from it; provide policy advice that legitimizes or challenges the status quo; evaluate past policies or political judgment in a way that embarrasses a government or that supports a government's handling of particular past policies; promote public consultation and consensus-building or stimulate controversy and dissension; generate information, research, and knowledge in a conceptual, instrumental, or legitimating fashion; serve interest articulation and networking in a "nodal" or brokering mode or act to undermine the potency of particular stakeholders; promote public access to hearings and a broad outreach or restrict proceedings to a cloistering of experts and true believers; politically mobilize for a commission's own needs or assume a formal disdain for such activities; call attention to obvious public problems or redefine old situations as new public problems thus extending the normative envelope; fact-find in a judicial or hard science tradition or interpret, argue, and persuade through extensive public reasoning; delay, postpone, or catalyze governmental decisions; safeguard vested interests or advocate for the disadvantaged and marginalized; and appeal in a report to a wide audience or narrow the pitch for the sole elucidation of policy "wonks". Commissions may treat some of these functions as core tasks and some as constraints, but that too is a product of internal debates about strategies and priorities. The emphasis on one function or another is partially defined by a number of factors: the nature of the mandate; the degree of elasticity in the arm's-length relationship between a commission and the government of-the-day; and the range of commission scope may be constrained by legal, economic,
and political considerations, not the least of which is the level of funding for a commission. But the choice of which functions are primary and which are secondary or not utilized at all was, in RCOL's case, largely a construct of the wishes and needs of commissioners and researchers.

The interpretation of what purposes RCOL served is ultimately subjective; RCOL's purposes were not the same for former Minister Cooke as they were for RCOLers and each RCOLer had more consonance with one aspect than another. While researchers were animated by their particular work situations to discuss aspects of the hearings and internal knowledge construction, the purview of the commissioners, particularly the co-chairs, also included how RCOL reacted with, and influenced, its task environment.

From the perspective of RCOLers, the Royal Commission on Learning served a number of purposes that were constructed in tandem with the core purpose of knowledge construction. Evaluation was one of these purposes, as the work of RCOLers prompted them to assess the state of public education and scrutinize the various policy initiatives at play during the first part of the 1990s, inside and outside of Ontario. Both Minister Cooke and RCOLers thought the Commission succeeded in creating a consensus for reform; Cooke thought this was RCOL's major contribution but RCOLers' perception of consensus-creating was different from Cooke's. They felt that RCOL's consensus-creating was used by Cooke to legitimate initiatives that suited his agenda but they saw the creating of a consensus as the building of wide public support for the spirit of, and recommendations of, the Report. According to RCOLers the policy advice function of the Commission was hamstrung by the timing of the release of the Report on the heels of a provincial election, blunted by Cooke's cherry-picking, and ultimately eviscerated by Snobelen's violation of the spirit of the Report. While several royal commissions made a contribution to the understanding of public policy through original research (Cairns, 1990; Simeon, 1987), RCOL was constrained by budget and time-lines, producing a type of applied research that was a synthesis of available literature, commissioned papers, and the discretion and judgment of commissioners and researchers. RCOL also served a vital purpose as a political instrument designed by commissioners to ensure the Commission's early credibility and survival in the face of stakeholder rancour and public scepticism. Promoting wide public access through the hearings and outreach activities demonstrated the Commission's support of the inquiry process in the spirit of the Berger Commission (Torgerson, 1986). Another major purpose ascribed by RCOLers is what I

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term "cathartic bully-pulpit," the view that the RCOL process and its product not only served to purge a large chunk of rancour and scepticism about educational reform, but also that RCOL framed and led the discussion about the direction that reform should take.

RCOL as an Evaluative Instrument

One of the primary purposes carved out by RCOL was the evaluation of past education policies, of governmental policy instruments, and of the present school system. Evaluation issues are often discussed in policy-related texts after other issues have been dealt with: this reflects the logic that evaluation of a policy is often done ex post, after a policy has been implemented and various impacts can be assessed. For policy-oriented commissions, however, evaluation is a central concern that runs through all the phases of the organization. Evaluative judgments on past policy and the present educational system in RCOL's case came from a variety of sources (presenters in hearings, the media, commissioners and researchers, policy-makers and policy documents, experts, outside readers, and formal and informal networks) and featured a number of evaluative criteria (input, process, and output). The Report itself is to a large extent evaluative: each chapter begins with an evaluation of the topic under concern; it establishes criteria by which schooling should be evaluated; and it recommends the means to allow for a greater evaluative capacity at three different levels of the system.

The difficulties posed by the task of evaluation within RCOL were manifold. Leaving aside the obvious constraints of lack of information and of time discussed elsewhere, the larger problem at issue here is that different stakeholders used different criteria to evaluate the performance of the system and fidelity to goals, each of which produced a different type of evaluation, and each presented differing positions about which variables should be weighted most (Cf. Majone, 1989, pp. 172-175). For example, teachers and their federations have traditionally favoured input criteria like years of teaching experience, educational credentials, size of classes, and hours of work. Presenters in the hearings from this stakeholder group would thus stress a combination of professional and work-condition variables to judge their own performance. Their self-evaluation during the hearings can be summed up by the oft-repeated statement: "Under the present circumstances, we are coping the best we can." On the other hand, parents, students, education reform groups, and other outside stakeholders tended to stress criteria related to process variables (course content, grading procedures, teaching methods, and
teacher-student interactions) and outcomes (demonstrated levels of student proficiency through standardized assessments or some form of centralized assessments, and ultimately aggregated assessments of schools, school boards, and the school system). In this vein, students complained of "teachers who have retired on the job," "boring and unchallenging" lessons, and that uniform student-assessment policies should replace the "unfairness" of a school-based assessment system that produced highly variable standards in grading policies and practices. Some parents' groups took aim at the perceived failings of twenty-five years of "progressive education policies and child-centred education." Taxpayer groups combined input and output criteria, claiming that "more value for money" or "bang for the buck" should be forthcoming from the system, i.e., that achievement levels as outputs should reflect a major input, the total cost of public education.

Evaluating process criteria posed a particular problem to a Commission mostly composed of outside, non-experts: in the place of professional expertise about a complex set of interrelated issues came a reliance on the subjective views of presenters, in-house individuals, and various experts, whose judgments were anything but monolithic and homogeneous. Outcome variables were for practical purposes non-existent, fragmented, or rudimentary at RCOL's inception.

As mentioned earlier, the few large-scale assessments that took place during RCOL's existence were hotly contested as to their meaning, and the "outcomes-based" orientation of the new "Common Curriculum" was not only in the discussion phase but its purview was limited to Kindergarten to Grade 9. Moreover, the commissioners were not of one mind as to which criteria (input, process, or outcomes) were of more value in assessing the present merits of the present education system and the related question of whose judgment in these matters should be trusted most. While Caplan thought that process-oriented criteria like the quality of teachers was important, Bégin was aghast that no output criteria like large-scale assessments could adequately guide her colleagues to judgment. Majone (1989, p. 174), on the other hand, leaves little doubt that he believes process variables are the most useful for school reform in particular: "In order to improve schools, officials need information about what actually happens in the classroom--course content, grading procedures, teaching methods, teacher-student interactions--and standardized tests do not provide such information."
RCOL as a Research Instrument

Unlike some royal commissions such as British Columbia's Sullivan Commission (Manzer, 1994) or the Macdonald Commission (Simeon, 1987), RCOL made no substantial contribution to policy development through original research, whether in the form of statistical surveys, educational histories, or public opinion studies. None of RCOL's commissioned papers was initiated directly in response to a research question posed by RCOL; rather each was a typically recycled scholarly pieces that reflected current research interests of various scholars, topics that could be of use to shed light on matters before RCOL. The commissioned papers, later printed in limited distribution as "Background Papers", were mainly solicited from various scholars from a deliberately large number of faculties of education and from O.I.S.E to inform the internal deliberation process. Unlike some other commissions, RCOL did not have a single research director whose function was to initiate and coordinate research and thus the commissioning of papers was left to the discretion of individual researchers, without an integrated concept of what topics needed research.

Bégine considered the lack of original research to be a major weakness of RCOL's overall design, attributable to budgetary and time constraints imposed by the Cooke ministry; Caplan would have preferred more research on topics related to rebutting the "myths" about educational systems in countries like Japan and Germany that he thought were used to denigrate Ontario public education; Murphy would have preferred the use of some of the research budget for a public opinion survey to explore where the public stood on value-related questions. Bégine (Interview, 1995) made her viewpoint abundantly clear:

A major constraint for me was that, in Canada, royal commissions have based the credibility of their report and recommendations on research and only incidentally on briefs and public opinion, using academic and systematic research. We would be the first royal commission of this magnitude not to have the money to do any original research and we did not do any original research. To my knowledge commissions involved in the development of public policy have always had major budgets for original research. We had peanuts...We surmounted that constraint, I think, very well...We tried a strategy of begging for collaboration, and it worked. We obtained expert opinion instead of original research by top names in Ontario at a modest cost. I was very afraid that universities would dismiss our work in five minutes but it didn't happen.

Like the report of the Pepin-Robarts Task Force (Cameron, 1993), RCOL's report was primarily a synthesis of commissioned papers, recent policy documents, the literature consulted by
researchers and commissioners, and the positions staked out in internal deliberations.

The commission-related literature takes the role of research quite seriously and looks at the issue from several different angles. Bulmer (1993, pp. 43-44) writes that [British] commissions exhibit different modes in incorporating research: little or no research; research commissioned, but to little or no effect; research as argument; research as underpinning of conclusion; research as integral to conclusions; and research as the primary or even sole purpose of the commission. In RCOL's case, only the last mode can be easily discounted; the other modes, depending upon the relevant section of the Report, can be said to be incorporated into RCOL. If research is construed as original research, RCOL made no contribution; if "recycled" commissioned papers are used as the benchmark, then RCOL's two-volume compilation of Background Papers provided a forum for dozens of scholars writing on a number of topics directly related to Ontario education. Some of these papers had a direct impact on these deliberations, such as those by King (1995) on secondary school issues, Nagy (1995) on assessment, Paquette (1995) on trends in educational policy, Scane (1995) on school boards and site-based management, Biemiller (1995) on phonics and language instruction, and Dei (1995) on black focus schools and minority issues, but many did not. One could judge a paper's impact in a number of ways: the number of times it was cited by researchers and commissioners in internal discussions to bolster or refute an argument, and the number of times a paper would be cited in the argumentation of the Report itself. In some way or another, the more cited papers found their way into argumentation and some into recommendations.

Perhaps of greater significance than the observation of Bulmer is the finding of Simeon (1987) about how the design of research contributes to the privileging or disprivileged of knowledges. Simeon (1987, p. 171) wrote of the three-discipline format within the research design of the Macdonald Commission and the "privileging" of certain knowledges over others. In RCOL's research design, the failure to include the capacity to cost recommendations, even at a rudimentary level, meant that little could be done in the way of some type of analysis that might meet the question head on of what the projected costs would be in the face of shrinking budgets. Efficiency might be cited as a key value in public education in the literature, but within RCOL it was given short shrift. Caplan (Interview, 1995) justified the lack of attention to costing as a function of not having any commissioner on board who was interested in such matters. This deficiency, however, could have been
remedied with the acquisition of a researcher with number-crunching skills; certainly a MET secondment in this area would have compensated for the inclusion of another "outside" researcher or a consultant that was impeded by budgeting constraints. But the commissioners chose not to consider this issue important enough to find someone for this explicit purpose. While they obviously did not consider costing a paramount task, several critics of the Report, of various ideological hues, complained that the lack of number-crunching research was a serious deficiency. One of the more thorough assessments along these lines is Paquette (1996) whose seventeen-page treatment of RCOL's costing implications ended on this critical yet sympathetic note:

In short, the fiscal implications of the Report are largely uncertain in their details and in their overall scope. What does seem certain, however, is that those fiscal implications would include a voracious, and hence politically unacceptable, appetite for new spending, and a politically equally unacceptable transfer of almost $2,000 per pupil in spending power out of the Metropolitan Toronto area.

For all of its considerable value as a thorough, and in my view, insightful policy review of elementary and secondary education in Ontario and as an interesting and attractive vision for the future of that education, the Report seems particularly vulnerable, because of its minimal attention to resource issues, to being transformed into something the Commissioners never dreamed of (p. 154).

RCOL, to use Simeon's terms (1987), favoured a "soft" knowledge format offered by researchers with social science or arts backgrounds and eschewed the "hard" knowledge that a researcher or researchers with an economic or finance background could have provided. In the case of the Macdonald Commission, the bias was for hard knowledge which led to subsequent criticism that only the economic aspects of free trade were given full consideration, to the detriment of political and cultural considerations (Simeon, 1987).

Decisions taken during the orientation period created a research team divided along differing lines and status. The organization of the research team was not only along functional lines (topic areas) but also along interests tied to community (Roman Catholic, francophone, and ethno-cultural). Another problematic decision was the hiring of two key researchers without the consent of all commissioners; and the secondment of researcher personnel from MET without the consent of the co-chairs. For researchers, where they came from, under what circumstances, and how they were chosen, all correlated strongly with the degree of access a researcher would have with one or more
commissioners. Within RCOL, the knowledges of certain researchers were (dis)-privileged on political criteria, and screened in terms of insider and outsider bias.

The research design within RCOL was undoubtedly weakened by the lack of policy alternatives generated from within. The lack of an overall research director meant that what research was pursued in terms of commissioned papers and the gathering of research materials was largely undertaken by individual researchers. No decision was made that commissioned papers should represent at least two alternative ways of looking at critical issues. Thus a large number of papers were commissioned on a large number of topics, but no topic was tackled by two different scholars in the context of developing some sort of choice paradigm for the commissioners. Instead, as time constraints became critical in the spring of 1994, the writing process pushed some researchers into the roles of writers and chief argument-makers, and once this process was underway the internal debate was focussed on what the researcher's argument was and the commissioners' reaction to and digestion of it. The sheer volume of detail before the commissioners meant that many elements at the conceptual level were given very little time for internal debate, and that the big conceptual picture emerged only at the end of the writing process. This is not to say that alternative views and ways of looking at things did not play a role, but at the research-design level there was a lack of a capacity that explicitly offered more than one fully-formed policy alternative from which to choose. Above I gave the example of how the internal debate on secondary school issues was constrained by the lack of explicit alternatives. Although this issue was subject to less debate within RCOL than some other researchers would have wanted, it shares with all other topics the common denominator of the lack of conceptualized alternatives other than that provided by the researcher who wrote the piece and the one commissioned paper used to frame the issues. Richardson (1988) made a similar criticism about the research design of B.C.'s Sullivan Commission, that much of its research was marred by the lack of conceptualized alternatives, with its research findings eventually to be largely accepted as uncontested "state-of-the art" of educational knowledge by the government-of-the-day.

Rubenson (1988) noted that research in royal commissions can serve three basic functions, that all three may be at work in a commission, and that the issue is one of a proper balance. The conceptual position seeks to promote a broad understanding of the policy problems; the instrumental position produces facts to inform decision-making, and the legitimating function uses research to provide
support for or to justify policy decisions that a government wishes to undertake.

Conceptually, the commissioned papers were not of much assistance in developing the four engines: the pieces on community and teacher education were used by RCOLers literally as background material and not to establish or develop a conceptual framework; the engines of early childhood education and information technology are not discussed in the Background Papers. Thus the research on and the development these topics relied on in-house staff and the literature, scholarly and popular, available at the time. The development of the engine of information technology was particularly constrained by time: although identified early as an engine or lever, the actual writing of much of the chapter did not coalesce until well into the process and its further development was arrested by the need for closure as the printing date loomed. The engine of community alliances, of all the pieces, was the most difficult conceptually, as commissioners wanted to emphasize different aspects and even the intervention of an outside consultant failed to produce a draft that was internally acceptable. Teacher education and early childhood education, on the other hand, proved much easier to conceptualize (the literature was rich on these issues) and there was substantial agreement as what the important issues were.

Whatever deficits one may attribute to the four engines on a conceptual level (Milburn et al., 1996), these elements of research-as-synthesis/argument were relatively successful at the level of persuasion, if one gauged the official reaction of Minister Cooke to the Report, the support of all three political parties in the Legislature and media attention, except for early childhood education. In this respect, research-as-synthesis may also serve an important persuasive function that is not noted by Rubenson (1989).

The two other functions of commission research Rubenson (1989) addressed are instrumental and legitimating. Fact-finding to inform every-day decision-making, the instrumental approach, was probably the least important research function performed by RCOL. The lack of a capacity for original research meant that RCOL was unlikely to uncover any "facts" not already known by the Ministry of Education and Training; if anything, RCOL was highly reliant upon MET for some of its data and its facts and also on the published research efforts of the larger school boards and faculties of education/O.I.S.E. Furthermore, the rather complex argumentation of the Report is top-heavy on argumentation and generalizations, and facts were marshalled as props for this larger purpose. On the
other hand, RCOL research-as-synthesis served a major function in legitimating governmental decisions taken by the Cooke and Snobelen ministries. Such is the fate of many royal commissions, as the person who pays the piper ultimately calls the tune.

Policy Advice: How Cooke Assessed RCOL

Cooke (Interview, 1996) explained that the speed with which his Ministry reacted to the RCOL Report was a product of parallel work within the Ministry, commencing early in the process, to create a number of scenarios of possible RCOL recommendations and how they would be translated into policy initiatives. Several initiatives were planned whether the Commission recommended them or not. The biggest disappointment that Cooke had with the Report was the failure to recommend school board amalgamation.

We worked on a number of scenarios starting in the spring of 1994. We assumed that the Commission was going to do something for parental involvement and worked on three or four options. We were already committed to more investment in computer technology. We were going to have a testing agency regardless of the Commission, as well as the province-wide curriculum; we had work already done on that, especially on learning outcomes with which a lot of us weren't happy. We thought the Ministry had to go the next step, and we put into a place a process of the new curriculum. We had teams set up in the Ministry to work on a number of scenarios, then when we were briefed by the Commission we put it into high gear. In choosing those policy options close to the Commission's recommendations it wasn't because the Commission was telling us every week what was going to be in their Report. [Instead] we had Ministry people going to public hearings and my political staff was very helpful in keeping us informed.

The draft report was given to me to read over the Christmas [1994] holidays. I read it then and then we started the New Foundations announcements at the beginning of February [1995] to the beginning of March. Many of the New Foundations announcements come out of the Royal Commission and a few of them don't. We did the independent testing agency but called for more testing, we did the college of teachers which was completely in keeping, we did the early literacy intervention program, [dropping] grade 13, and reinvestment in the pre-Kindergarten towards moving to a full day program and then the pilot projects for the three to five year olds, the standards, and the moving of the curriculum to a province-wide curriculum. These were all based on the Royal Commission.

One major difference was we also called for the Sweeney group to look at the reduction in the number of school boards which the Commission didn't call for. The Royal Commission didn't give that issue adequate time in their report. I still think they are dead
wrong...I think a reduction of school boards is fundamental to restoring public confidence in the system and it would have saved money over time, in particular in Northern Ontario where half the school boards are in the province, covering 750,000 people. There's one school board for every 10,000 people in Northern Ontario: it's ridiculous, so I think we were right to deviate from that particular recommendation.

Cooke (Interview, 1996) felt that the most important function of the Commission was in developing a consensus about education reform but observed that waiting for RCOL to table its report acted as a constraint for the implementation of his Ministry's agenda. He also thought that RCOL provided credibility and legitimacy to many of the reforms that his Ministry was opting for and for those reforms that the Harris government subsequently decided to implement, with the exception of improving early childhood intervention which Cooke thought was the most important recommendation of the Report.

I felt the Commission was more necessary at the beginning than the end of the process. What was useful I think was that the Commission brought people together and came about as close to developing a consensus on what was needed as I think was possible in the education system. I think it served that useful purpose. By the time the Commission actually tabled its report a lot of the things they recommended were things we were already working on...If anything the Royal Commission slowed us down a bit but I think it was an important process. If we came in with some of those reforms without a Royal Commission people would have felt cut out of the process, so I think in that respect it was very useful. It also gave some credibility to some of the changes that the current [Harris] government is still going ahead with. If we [the New Democrats] had just done them, it wouldn't have surprised me if the [Conservative] government would have pulled back some of the reforms. Instead they're going ahead with some of them as they received a lot of public support when the Commission tabled its report. The major fundamental recommendation in this report was early intervention. We said we weren't going to go hog wild on the three year olds: we didn't have the money but we were moving in that direction and we were reinforcing [junior kindergarten] and early intervention. As you know we have gone in a very opposite direction with [the Harris] government. The recommendations for testing and the college of teachers still stand and the system will be in good stead in the future. But the major thrust [of the Report] was early intervention and a reorientation of some of the expenditures of Grade 13 to the early years, and [the Harris government] tossed that out.

Cooke (Interview, 1996) thought that RCOL exceeded his expectations particularly in creating a consensus among key stakeholders and in winning over media opinion. He contended, however, that the co-chairs were perhaps politically naive in not apprehending possible adverse reaction to the
recommendation for ECE, and on school board amalgamation. As well, Cooke contended that the Ministry's conception of parent-dominated advisory councils was a more politically-astute reading of the landscape than the community-based council that RCOL recommended.

I think that I was hoping they would put everything together as a package and that we would have, for the first time in a long time, a provincial education strategy. Where they exceeded my expectations was on the development of a consensus. The Report was pretty amazing: teachers, administrators, opposition parties, parent groups, everybody was praising it. It received incredible editorial support.

The only thing that turned out to be controversial for a while and overtook some other significant recommendations in the Report was the 3 year old thing [the ECE recommendation]. Gerry and Monique were pretty surprised at how that blew up. I personally wasn't surprised because when governments are in financial straits and the conservative movement is happening and parents think that government butts too much into families' lives and when we see too much of the States [experience in this area] and not enough of Europe, to me it was pretty predictable. It was also close to the election and Mike Harris [the Conservative opposition leader and soon-to-be Premier] said ECE was the most stupid recommendation he'd ever heard...We had to put that one to rest: it was the only thing the media were interested in getting a reaction on.

The Commission refused to link the structure of governance to educational change. Again they don't have to think of the politics: there would be new French language school boards set up but [the Commission didn't] accept a reduction in the number of school boards. If you implemented this, we would have ended up with more school boards. I think the public would have gone crazy.

The Commission ignored the real movement behind parental involvement in schools, they were too soft on that. We didn't go to full parental control over budgets - they became an advisory group - we gave the parents the majority [of membership on the councils]. If we hadn't done that the organized parents' groups would have not only opposed the Commission but also the New Foundations initiatives. We wanted a full review of councils either after three or five years of [such councils] which I think is pretty fundamental before you go any further steps.

For Cooke (Interview, 1996), the timing of the release of the Report close to a provincial election campaign was unfortunate, in that the Ministry did not have enough time to move some of its preferred recommendations, such as early intervention, through the policy-making and implementation stages, and thus make it difficult for any successive Ministry to roll the reforms back. The election process was another source of disappointment to Cooke. Though he had a strong belief
that education reform should have been made a central part of the NDP platform for re-election, other opinions to the contrary within his own party prevailed.

Timing in retrospect was unfortunate. If we had appointed the Commission earlier we could have implemented it earlier. Even though we didn't accept the recommendation for ECE we could have used that extra time to shore up JK and senior kindergarten and any future government would have had difficulty trying to unravel these changes.

I also think that the government made a major mistake in not making education a major election issue. Polling said education wasn't a main issue and even though I was on the election committee I was unsuccessful in convincing our people that it should be made an issue.

The Policy-Advice Function As Seen by RCOlers

Most RCOlers thought that the policy advice function of RCOL was limited, constrained by Minister Cooke's own agenda and the timing of the release of the Report on the heels of a provincial election process. The co-chairs had particularly biting words for how Cooke handled the Report upon its release.

With the hindsight of several months since the release of the Report, the unfolding of the New Foundations, the defeat of the Rae Government, and the installation of a new Minister at MET, John Snobelen, former commissioners and researchers were asked about what purposes they thought that RCOL had served. Stated with some fervour, their answers indicate that several of them did not think that the Report had any substantial impact as a policy advice instrument on the Cooke Ministry. While equivocating about the policy advice function, RCOlers were more of one mind about two other purposes: as a cathartic bully pulpit to promote consensus about educational reform, and as a two-edged political instrument.

The co-chairs and several researchers were dismissive of Cooke's intentions for RCOL. Their views were based on the manner in which Cooke had tried "to use" RCOL politically during its lifetime, and the subsequent reaction of the Cooke Ministry to the Report, as exemplified by the New Foundations initiatives that some claimed "cherry-picked" (a favourite researcher phrase) only a few of the recommendations and modified others. Bègin (Interview, 1995) stated in this regard:

It is clear to me now that the Minister and his people had their own agenda and for them RCOL didn't count at all. It was total cynicism on their part...Our diagnosis of problems and solutions had nothing to do with what he had in mind. [For Cooke, RCOL] was the
gadget he needed for the credibility of his own agenda.

Caplan (Interview, 1995) had a similar perception about Cooke's intentions:

I was openly dismayed at Cooke’s intransigence. I was thrilled he accepted what he did, but he used only those things he wanted to. He never had any intention of listening to us. [His] amalgamation and testing ideas he had very early on from the polls which are [typically] full of 'beating your wife questions' and simple-minded answers to simple-minded questions. [Charles] Beer [the Liberal critic for education], and [Lynn] McLeod [the Liberal Opposition leader] were more interested in RCOL and would have given us a more receptive hearing than Cooke.

In a like-minded vein, Researcher A (Interview, 1995) added: "RCOL provided a recipe with symmetry that was turned into a menu by the Cooke Ministry...Cooke eviscerated the Report and cherry-picked about 25 or so recommendations, out of 167, that suited his agenda". RCOLers claimed, in this regard, that rather than using the Commission as a stalling tactic or to deflect criticism away from his Ministry (a purpose attributed to some royal commissions), Cooke had a very clear agenda that he wanted implemented expeditiously. In this light, "waiting for RCOL" might have been a constraint to Ministerial discretion, an unwelcome legacy of Tony Solipo's Ministry.

Murphy (Interview, 1995) had a more sanguine appraisal of Cooke's response to, and the future of, the Report:

I think one of the most important purposes that the Commission served was to indicate practical and doable directions for the future of education in the province. Look at what happened to the levers. ECE was not accepted by the NDP Government but was used by Cooke so as to strengthen junior and senior kindergarten. The recommendations on information technology, professional education and development of teachers, and community education were accepted by the Government and all political parties. The influence of that acceptance on education will be significant.

Thus within RCOL, the predominant view (with the exception of Murphy) was that Cooke's New Foundations initiative was less a response to RCOL than an independently arrived at piece of policy making that bore the preferences of the Minister. Where RCOL recommendations fitted in with this agenda such as on assessment and accountability issues they were incorporated, and where they did not, such as on governance and funding, they were ignored. Cooke's own views on this subject were not dissimilar: the Ministry was apprised of certain general directions RCOL was heading in, and had the same access to key stakeholders, and they prepared a number of contingency plans to react to, and
to implement, key RCOL recommendations. He had, however, already decided the general direction that these reforms should take, RCOL's impending report notwithstanding. This scenario would suggest that RCOL's recommendations were used to legitimate policy initiatives that the government was planning to implement, and that the consensus-building attributed to RCOL was utilized by the government to introduce reforms that were largely on the government's agenda, not necessarily on RCOL's.

Consensus-Building As Seen by RCOLers

While RCOLers had decidedly mixed opinions about the Commission's impact on the government's policy development, they had a more positive appraisal of the Commission's role in promoting a consensus for educational reform. A consensus is an end-state, the product of diverse interventions with the aim of securing a "collective judgment or belief; solidarity of opinion; general agreement or concord; harmony" (Webster's, 1991, p. 289). The type of consensus that RCOLers believed they helped achieve is of two types, one related to the RCOL's process and the other to its product, the Report. In terms of the process, promoting general agreement or belief among stakeholders and the attentive public about the need for reform and its "doability" was a major goal that RCOLers felt they accomplished. The crafting of the Report's recommendations promoted a second type of consensus, one that was explicitly political: recognizing the legitimate interests of all the major parties involved and ensuring that reforms tried to accommodate them. In this scenario for consensus, policy change is not a Commission-brokered compromise of conflicting interests, but rather an essentially reformist strategy that balances the need for change with the need for stability.

The creation of a consensus was by no means assured. At the inception of RCOL in May 1993, the political atmosphere surrounding the Commission was nothing less than hostile. Both co-chairs spoke of the negative tone of the media at the time concerning the state of public education in general and whether such a commission was called for. Caplan also referred to the growing hostility about commissions in general that found its way into the media: the expensive federal Commission on Reproductive Technologies had recently ended, hamstrung by bitter infighting highlighted in the national media; the report of the Erasmus Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was overdue in Ottawa, over budget and openly criticized. This public scepticism about the efficacy of commissions in general
would only deepen during RCOL's tenure (Simpson, 1997). Educational politics at the time had also taken a turn for the conflictive; OSSTF had led the unsuccessful charge of teacher federations in demanding the resignation of Tony Solipo, whose portfolio Cooke had taken over. Major inside stakeholders were divided about whether a royal commission was indeed necessary; many of them sceptically called into question the motivation behind the establishment of RCOL, and contended that RCOL was either designed to take the heat off the Minister or that it would end up recommending reforms that the government was already in favour of. The imposition of the Social Contract during this same time frame had catalyzed teacher federations' sense of betrayal by a government that they had once considered sympathetic to their agendas. Caplan's involvement as co-chair was cited as evidence of the partisanship, not impartiality, of Commission leadership, because of his long-term advocacy for, and positions of authority in, the provincial and federal New Democratic Party, the same party which formed the government that chose the Commission. As noted by Bégin (Orbit, 1995, pp. 57):

The public and the media [at the inception of RCOL] greeted the creation of the Commission with total cynicism. They considered the Commission a delaying tactic and a cheap palliative to action. A media clippings review establishes this clearly. As for organized teaching, it would have nothing to do with a Commission borne out of the same government - "their" government - that had invented, and was imposing, the Social Contract. Then it became clear that the Commission's budget would not allow any significant original research - the trademark of good royal commissions. The last blow came ten weeks after, when our Executive Director [Jill Hutcheon] was called back to MET. For a while, the Commission seemed doomed to fail; everything was going wrong...

The public hearings that commenced in September 1993 confirmed to the co-chairs that they faced an uphill battle in promoting consensus. Caplan (Interview, 1995) described the educational politics of the hearings as polarized and conflictive, with organized inside stakeholders obstinately committed to stalemate or wedded to what were perceived as simplistic notions of reform. Bégin (Interview, 1995) portrayed the political atmosphere of the hearings in a similar light as Caplan, with demoralized teachers, cynical trustees and bureaucrats, a rudderless Ministry, angry parents and taxpayers, with polarized interest groups on either side of a large body of presenters whose positions were not easy to categorize. For her part, all of these presenters had to be included in the political calculus of the commissioners.

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When we began we were faced with a demoralised body of teachers; a cynical body of trustees, and a similar body of directors of education and bureaucrats in the school boards; a Ministry that seemed as incompetent as people were saying, a Ministry that had been recently totally destabilized by reorganization, with the February 1993 regrouping of three ministries into one. The parents and taxpayers were mad. On the one hand, there were very vocal groups called the Quality Education movement and the Education Reform Network. On the other hand, at the local level, progressive individuals and groups were pushing for great projects; they were not organized and not very vocal. In the middle were a massive amount of people that you didn't know where to fit or where they belonged, and we had to put all of that together.

RCOL as the Commissioners' Political Instrument

That the battle for external consensus was considered a success by RCOLers is largely attributable to the skilful political use of the Commission by the commissioners, particularly in terms of the development and execution of a political strategy. This strategy primarily served the political needs of the Commissioners. As an instrument for political mobilization, RCOL served to promote the credibility of the Commission itself in its first, uncertain phase; to argue for the common interest in face of stakeholder stalemate and conflict; to consolidate public and media opinion on the need for education reform; and to mobilize public opinion to pressure the Government to take the Report seriously. As a political instrument, RCOL used a vigorous communication and outreach strategy to reach beyond the confines of a narrow stakeholdership, and elevated the role of the public hearings to serve core educative and political functions in the overall process of the Commission.

Caplan, Bégin, Glaze, and Bharti spoke of creating a consensus for education reform in a way different from Cooke's understanding, less as a platform to promote Cooke's agenda and more as a process and a strategic document to shape the discourse about publicly-funded education in Ontario:

As a piece of policy advice, RCOL was successful only in areas where the government was already committed. But RCOL was successful in Newman's terms...of leading the debate in the right direction [Peter C. Newman, the noted Maclean's journalist and author] (Caplan, Interview, 1995).

The Report expressed a consensus that pleased most stakeholders. People felt listened to, especially progressive people: it empowered individuals. It was a relief for people to see that we recognized them and their importance to the system. We had struck the balance that they wanted (Bégin, Interview, 1995).

[RCOL] engaged people in discussion around educational issues and involved the
media...We created a historical document that identified key issues. Some recommendations are going ahead and being implemented. The Report gave people a direction and a focus for a number of initiatives (Glaze, Interview, 1995).

People were sceptical at first but the hearings helped decrease this. RCOL started a process of change in many districts. If RCOL could reach a consensus, then the public could also (Bharti, Interview, 1995).

Bégin (Orbit, pp. 57-58) articulated how the commissioners devised a strategy to mobilize public opinion and to counter stakeholder resistance in a complex system, and to ensure that RCOL would be perceived as much more than a delaying tactic or political tool of the Government. In the first days of the Commission, its credibility and viability were in jeopardy, as several factors combined to create an adverse political atmosphere. This political mobilization, Bégin vouched, was successful. Public opinion changed to a more positive note through the hearings and outreach strategies, the media came on side, and recalcitrant stakeholders made a commitment to participate, as this extensive quote from Bégin details:

Very early in the game, knowing we would be confronted with a provincial election at some point close to the tabling of our report, we identified the need to mobilize the public first, and the stakeholders second, to take ownership of our report and of its recommendations. We also determined we wanted a report that was comprehensive and in-depth, but doable. It was very clear to me that politicians do not act if they don't perceive a public demand, and this fear of action increases with the complexity of the portfolio at stake. Education, like health, had all the elements for lots of rhetoric and no action: powerful and vocal constituencies, strong emotional individual reactions often translated into cliches and preconceived ideas and contradicting demands, expensive needs, and so on. The best, and the only, insurance for future action on our report we could "buy" (on which we could possibly act) lay in a mobilized public and interested stakeholders demanding implementation of the report from the government. That informed our work from day one. We did our share, helped by the media, whose attitude changed from negative to positive during the public hearings in the fall of 1993. Somehow we succeeded, through our style of interacting with the partners and with students and other young people, in gaining the trust of stakeholders, and in creating credibility for the Commission. Education as a subject of subject interest then captured the public's imagination and the media's attention. We can say, in all modesty, that we raised the profile of education in the province. A true, sustained public debate took place in Ontario.

Glaze (Interview, 1995) thought that the political mobilization strategy was successful in convincing people, beyond the confines of an inner circle, that RCOL was committed to listening, and
in combatting public and stakeholder cynicism about the nature of RCOL's relationship with the Government and about RCOL's political orientation:

The special outreach programs gave a clear indication of reaching out and creating alliances to a certain segment of our population, and was a special initiative taken by the commissioners. A number of us spoke to various groups and Gerry visited schools. [This type of activity] perhaps convinced people that we were really listening. Over time we were able to build trust and support, and endear ourselves to stakeholders, and people thought that maybe we were not puppets of the government but rather independent people who wanted to listen. People's attitudes towards the Commission changed as time progressed. From the political point of view, we made sure we met with different caucuses, to indicate that we were not partisan, that we were interested in listening to all regardless of political affiliations.

Murphy (Interview, 1995) spoke in a similar frame of mind as Bégain and Glaze, that the thrust of political mobilization was aimed at the broader public, the building of an alliance, to encourage their sense of ownership of the Report, and not primarily aimed at the Government:

I don't think the commissioners as a whole were overly concerned about how the political parties or Government would react to the Report or the recommendations. A major concern we had, and one of our strategies from the beginning, was in devising the public hearings and in struggling to make sure what we were about was adequately reported by the media, and in our attempts to assure our recommendations wouldn't get lost on a dusty shelf. Our hope was that the Report wouldn't get buried. We deliberately had public hearings, youth outreach involvement, and sent out thousands of brochures. We wanted to enlist the public as our ally and we wanted them to know what we are about. We wanted the public to force the Government to respond either positively or negatively, but not to let the Government take the Report and bury it. I think we were successful in mobilizing public opinion to pressure the Government, and the Report was not buried, although it's difficult to assess cause and effect in this type of situation.

The media strategy designed by RCOL was a major component of the political mobilization process because of the critical role the media plays in interpreting what a commission is about to the general public. The gaze of the media is strongest when a commission is engaged in public activities, especially hearings, which are usually held at the beginning of a commission's life cycle, and also at the end of the process when a report is released. In Chapter 2, for example, the treatment of commissions during these peak periods by high-profile journalists ranges, in Garman and Holland's conception (1995, p. 102), from "sceptical" (Simpson, 1997) to "sacred" (Salutin, 1997). Mackay (1990, p. 31) noted in this context the present challenge that faced the media was in "delineating the role of a particular
commission [to make it] understandable" (Mackay, 1990, p.31). In the case of RCOL, commissioners thought that the media not only had done an excellent job in delineating the Commission's role, but also that it had played a large role in swaying public opinion favourably when the Commission's credibility was particularly at stake in its early stages (Bégin, Interview, 1995).

Bégin (Interview, 1995) thought the hearings had educated the media about the complexity of issues and of the change process, and that the presenters in the hearings nudged the media away from one-note cynical critiques. The media, in turn, influenced general public opinion, as the commissioners began to engage stakeholders to define problems from a fresher perspective:

We always knew that we need the help of the media, but it was through the public hearings that the media started changing. I saw the public hearings as a key component, giving a voice to all parties to express themselves, and to show them that we were serious. We listened to people all over the province; somehow, the media got involved in that their job is to report, and they got interested and it worked. People seemed to be in opposite camps but we found a common thread and at the same time we got people off their usual ways of defining problems and got them on to something different and new, such as information technology, to name one.

RCOLers followed the press coverage avidly for the duration of the process, and the contents of the news clipping service provided to RCOL were regularly discussed within RCOL informally and in internal discussions. The political savvy of Caplan and Bégin, in particular, was attuned to acknowledging the importance of positive publicity. Mackay's (1990) treatment of the media profiles a commission's role in informing the public. An additional media function was serving as an important, external source of evaluation about the efficacy of RCOL itself, for the benefit of RCOL's members. As an arm's-length public instrument, there was little in the way of direct communication with MET during the process, and the general direction and recommendations that were being arrived at, were, for the most part, kept within a closely-confined circle of RCOLers, their confidantes, and four outside readers. Additional feedback, in the sense of outside scrutiny or evaluation, was by definition, almost negligible. The media, on the other hand, served a vital purpose in letting RCOLers know how well or badly they were doing.

A vignette may illustrate this relationship. After the first round of hearings in Ottawa, a number of RCOLers loaded up the van in anticipation of the next destination. Before our getaway, as was the daily ritual, a local paper was purchased to observe how the hearings were profiled, in this case by the
Ottawa Citizen (November, 17, 1993, p. A10). The Citizen on that day featured a large editorial, some of which is reprinted on page 41 in Volume 1 of the Report, that spoke of the "cacophony of divergent interests" at work in the Ottawa hearings, characterizing the latter as a "useful tool to help the commissioners with their colossal challenge," and it observed that the interpretation of these interests, in a way that would satisfy stakeholders, would require "the patience of Job and the wisdom of Solomon." The text of this editorial was subsequently reprinted through the Southam chain. Inside the van as we sped down the highway, Caplan and Bégin were elated with this biblically-flavoured review, and afterwards other major Ontario newspapers wrote of the Commission in similar terms. Among RCOLers, the sense of a change in media and public attitudes about RCOL was vivid. Just a few weeks prior to the Ottawa hearings, at the first public hearing in Thunder Bay, the commissioners had to contend with scepticism on the part of presenters, from teacher unions and education reform groups, who openly disparaged the Commission as politically-biased and unnecessary, a common theme that was also a mainstay of media treatment in the early days of RCOL. After Ottawa, the commissioners got a firmer sense that they were on the right road, and that their labours and reputations would henceforth merit a more respectful treatment.

Part of the political strategy of the commissioners was devising a number of signals sent out to various groups, with the underlying message that RCOL welcomed the widest participation and input possible and that this Commission valued the perspective of both insiders and outsiders, the advantaged and the disadvantaged, particularly giving those individuals and groups a voice in a forum that might otherwise be perceived as being skewed towards organized, articulate interest groups. In this respect, RCOL followed the pattern of fostering access for a wide range of groups for which the Berger Commission was noted in exceptional terms (Torgerson, 1987). The signals were numerous, and many hit their intended targets. A large number of hearings took place in small towns as well as in larger venues. The simultaneous translation of proceedings into French, at all venues and at great cost, showed a commitment to official bilingualism. The youth outreach program brought commissioners and staff into contact with a wide section of youth in places like shopping plazas and detention centres. The commissioners also took part in a number of interactive television programs. The two editions of Spotlight were widely distributed to all schools in the province and to stakeholder groups. The "user friendly" language of the Report, especially the shorter version, was consciously
aimed beyond the confines of a narrow, "inner" stakeholdership. The commitment of the commissioners to the implementation process, and to ensuring that their Report would not gather dust, helped perhaps to convince a sceptical public and weary educators that reform was indeed "doable."

Murphy maintained that while students were sent a signal that their input was welcome, RCOL was less willing to show the same interest to parents whose value base was perceived by some commissioners as conservative:

A clear signal we sent out was to students. We spent a lot of time, despite a restrictive budget, listening to kids in and out of class, student leaders and those on the outer edges. I think we could have done more for parents and reached out more to them. Rightly or wrongly, some of the parents who came to see us, particularly conservatives, were sent a signal that we were not as interested in parents as we should be. (Murphy, Interview, 1995)

RCOLer Perceptions of Stakeholder Reaction

RCOLer perceptions on how the Report was received by stakeholders suggest the recommendations found a great deal of acceptance, in a political sense, and that the document was an exercise primarily of political compromise in the way that the commissioners came to embrace this term. In other words, nothing in the Report was so offensive as to upset any major group, most groups got at least part of their agenda translated into recommendations (Catholics and francophones were the most successful), and the recommendations for educational reform were balanced with the preservation of traditional roles and structures. Factored out of the equation, however, were the strong lobby groups for publicly-funded religious choice schools.

Caplan (Interview, 1995) described the educational politics of the hearings as polarized and conflictive, and with organized inside stakeholders obstinately committed to stalemate. The political task of the Commission regarding interest groups was twofold: to promote compromise and educational reform. Compromise in this context did not mean getting groups to agree to a commissioner-brokered "meeting of the minds", but rather ensuring that the Report reflected that all the vocal and organized interests would get some of their demands met, but not everything they had hoped for. On this topic, an extended quote from this co-chair:

I believed it was not possible to bring all the groups together. On the one side we had the Quality Education people, starting at our first hearing in Thunder Bay. They created great conflict, and had close ties to Dianne Cunningham [the Conservative education critic] and
the Toronto Sun. On the other side, all the teacher organizations agreed that the system was great, it just needed tinkering. They were as Polyanna-ish as the Quality Education people were hysterical. Kids slipped through the cracks but nobody took responsibility for this, and this dismayed me, and many people were offended by this. The trustees were more of the same: in their world they're bigshots, and propagandists for complacency. We couldn't figure out what they did. Then there were decent, loving parents who said schools failed them.

We tried to be politically sensitive; we addressed everyone and gave something to everyone, at least some part of their wish list. [For example], I was [at first] offended by pro-phonics types who said that the teaching of phonics would solve all sorts of problems. We hired two O.I.S.E. professors who wrote that phonics is a valuable tool. This was a thrilling deduction for us. I also had the personal experience of a kid indifferent to language use, and we put an emphasis on old-fashioned literacy. This surprised the Quality Education types.

We said that "teachers are our heroes", but the unions had to change, they were getting in the way of reforms, and doing little more than protecting the rights of teachers. We missed the boat thinking that teachers would like the College of Teachers. The trustees were happy that we didn't agree to amalgamation and the abolition of trustees. The Roman Catholics were orgasmic over our recommendations regarding them. At first the Quality Education types liked the Report but later the curriculum and assessment parts disappointed them; they didn't have much influence afterwards.

We were politically astute: we didn't do anything we didn't believe in. We produced a win-win Report: something the Minister could say also had the support of Liberals and Conservatives, except for the ECE recommendation.

Researcher F (Interview, 1995) thought that the Report had something for everybody, leaving only the Minister, Dave Cooke, disappointed:

The Report was received surprisingly well by major stakeholders. The process of hearings and press coverage showed that the problems were complicated and prepared the way for compromise. RCOL did not take any extreme positions, and what recommendations were made were reasonably well supported. Very few recommendations were controversial, maybe ECE was the exception. The general public liked the recommendations around assessment and accountability; teachers were recognized and honoured; school boards were not hacked; the faculties of education were happy that their role was reinforced; Dave Cooke was quite disappointed about lack of support for his amalgamation drive; [his] New Foundations must have been decided in detail before the Report was released.

Murphy (Interview, 1995) maintained that while the Report received wide acceptance in the
Catholic and francophone communities, some trustees of the larger boards were not prepared to give it a fair reading, and so condemned aspects of it out of hand.

The Catholic and francophone communities felt the Report had responded to their aspirations. Catholic educators were quite pleased with the Report, first of all in general, secondly quite specifically in the recommendations it made about Catholic education. The same thing is true for the francophone community. As far as the other groups are concerned there were people who criticized the Report even before they read it, such as trustees in large boards who were getting large stipends and continue to do so and have made trusteeship a full-time job. One wonders on what basis they were criticizing it. But most people felt the Report was alright and in some cases thought it was wonderful.

RCOL as a Cathartic Bully-Pulpit

In addition to serving as a major instrument for political mobilization, RCOL served a purpose that I term cathartic bully-pulpit. Catharsis, suggested by Caplan (Interview, 1995), refers to "the purging of the emotions or relieving of emotional tensions, especially through a work of art, as of tragedy or music" (Webster's, 1991, p. 215). While Caplan was referring specifically to the "quelling" of the "destructive" Quality Education groups in the wake of the release of the Report, the notion of catharsis may with some justification be applied to major insider and outsider stakeholders, with the possible exception of the OSSTF executive and some radical socialists critics, who remained unmoved throughout the process. In this case, the public hearings served a cathartic function during a peak of public interest in, and of conflict surrounding, Ontario educational politics by providing a forum for the airing of grievances, assessing the demands of a complex web of stakeholders, of group interests, and of individuals, and combatting cynicism about public education and about RCOL. As Caplan (Interview, 1995) described this cathartic process:

We were a useful public platform at the peak of a wave of interest in public education. The Quality Education people were also at a peak, and after hearings they disappeared; they were destructive. We had a cathartic effect in many communities, especially through the hearings. The media cooperation shocked everyone and helped deflate a lot of concerns by showing how complex issues were.

Ironically, given Caplan's frankly partisan appraisal, getting everyone on board "in a non-partisan way" was also a frequent politically-tinged refrain of other RCOLers, that RCOL acted as an instrument to promote compromise in the conflictive atmosphere that had dogged Ontario education politics for the
last decade. For their part, several researchers underscored the importance of a number of functions related to establishing and leading discourse with stakeholders and the wider public as well as calming the swirling political waters surrounding public education, a notion that combines both cathartic and bully-pulpit purposes:

The Report has contributed to a quieting and calming down of public concern around education (Researcher G, Interview, 1995).

RCOL created a forum and a place for people to talk with one another. Through RCOL, people began to understand the complexity of educational issues (Researcher B, Interview, 1995).

RCOL engaged the public in a dialogue. We helped educators to see themselves in a new light. The Report put schools in context of community, collected and synthesized a mountain of information, and addressed the issue of diversity across Ontario. We had a major function in focussing direction, and addressed questions without being simplistic (Researcher E, Interview, 1995).

That the Report's recommendations did not radically rearrange the power structure of the public education system put a sense of closure to this catharsis, according to RCOLers. The Report was seen by RCOLers as a balanced compromise of values, ideas, and preferences, in which both stakeholder and commissioner got at least some of what they wanted, but not everything they would have wished for. For the Love of Learning is consequently a document of internal and external political compromise, neither the product of a RCOL-brokered meeting of the minds, nor an academically-consistent treatise in which the constituent parts conform to an all-encompassing vision.

A bully pulpit in a political sense refers to use of office to promote in a public fashion a particular ideal, goal, or plan, with the inference being that a particular audience needs an injection of persuasion in order to go along with the agenda of office holder; most often conjured up is the image of President Teddy Roosevelt with whom the notion of bully pulpit is closely associated. RCOLers thought that the public hearings in particular, as well as the general process, helped provide a number of bully-pulpit type functions, including, through the intervention of the media, an educative function in promoting understanding of the complexity of public issues, in stimulating the self-assessment of public educators, in pushing for top-down and bottom-up change, and in leading the discourse on the future of public education in Ontario.
The cathartic bully-pulpit purpose is somewhat related to Deal's perspective on commissions as ceremony. I noted Deal's observation (1995) that commissions are a form of modern myth-making and rituals that symbolically reflect "our faith in expertise and rational problem-solving. It is our way of summoning the power of reason. Through reason, scientific knowledge, and experts, we believe we can forge solutions that will either solve the problems or at least improve the situation somewhat" (1995, pp.121-122). While Deal's observation may be still valid in general terms, I would suggest, on an intuitive level, that RCOL's public hearings and the internal deliberation process demonstrate a growing scepticism with the notion of expertise and with the model of rational problem-solving, particularly in the realm of educational policy-making. In this scenario a modernist faith in expertise and rational policy-making are being displaced by reliance on politics based on the notion of public accountability and the open contestation of public values. Furthermore, I would suggest that the cathartic bully-pulpit purpose is more closely related to the original meaning of symbolic politics as articulated by Edelman (1977) who rooted the concept not in beliefs and rituals and their relationship to expertise and reason, but rather in the alleviation of fears, conflicts, and anxieties:

The personification and the resolution of the tension through the acting out of the contending hopes and fears, has always been a common practice in both primitive and advanced societies. To let the adversary groups oppose each other through the workings of an administrative agency (such as a commission or summit) continuously resolving the conflicts in "decisions" and "policies" replaces tension and uncertainty with a measure of clarity, meaning, confidence and security. This is precisely the function performed in more primitive societies by the rain dance, victory dance, and the peace pipe ceremony, each of which amounts to an acting out of contending forces that occasion widespread anxiety and a resolution that is acceptable and accepted. (Edelman, 1977, p.61)

The dance of consensus would thus be partly defined by cathartic elements to relieve public anxiety and conflict in the domain of public education, and by bully-pulpit elements related to redirecting the energies of the dancers to conjure a brighter future just over the horizon.

A VIEW ON IMPACT TWO YEARS LATER

More than two years after the release of the Report, Caplan in a newspaper interview (The Hamilton Spectator, May 10, 1997, p. N6) gave an updated overview of how he perceived the impact of RCOL on subsequent governmental policy making. He noted that timing was a significant constraint
to the Report's implementation in two ways. The call for a provincial election in May 1995 meant that Cooke's Ministry had only a short window of time to react to RCOL and develop policy, and the defeat of the Rae government meant that the remaining pieces of RCOL's agenda had to be re-evaluated by a new Minister, John Snobelen. The new Minister decided to continue support for the College of Teachers and the Office of Accountability and Assessment, but the new Progressive Conservative government would prove less sympathetic to key elements of RCOL recommendations, in a way that Caplan maintained violated the "spirit" of the larger argument presented in the Report. A central theme of RCOL's argument for a better education system was to increase the attention paid to, and investment of funding in, the primary levels of schooling, beginning with a provincially-funded ECE program. The Progressive Conservatives were unsympathetic to this argument: provincial support for junior kindergarten would be partially withdrawn by the Snobelen Ministry, forcing a number of school boards to cancel the program. (Mike Harris, as Leader of the Opposition, before the election had pronounced RCOL's ECE recommendation the "stupidest recommendation" he had ever heard). While RCOL had recommended the elimination of Grade 13/OAC, this was promoted in the context of shoring up curriculum and standards for pre-primary to Grade 12. Instead, Caplan lamented that RCOL's Report had hit a brick wall in the shape of the Snobelen Ministry:

None of [the new standards and curricula recommended by RCOL] have been released. An attempt at high school reform, which came out last fall, was wildly flawed. It was criticized by parents and educators alike and is back at the drawing board. No one knows whether it will ever emerge.

The notion of abolishing grade 13, which in principle is in agreement with our report, in fact violates our report in a number of ways. First of all, we argued passionately that the system must begin earlier with early childhood education and upgraded junior kindergarten. And exactly the opposite has happened with this government.

Secondly, [we argued] that the entire system from early childhood education through to grade 12 must be restructured, compressed and upgraded, which is not happening. And thirdly, the attempt to abolish grade 13 in the very, very short time lines that this government is giving it, is a terrible error. You cannot force significant reforms on the school system without giving them enough time to work through the system.

Moreover, Caplan continued, the deep funding cuts initiated by the Harris government to public education will continue, with the ultimate aim of reducing per-pupil funding. The motivation that
Caplan attributed to the Harris government's attitude about its version of educational reform is that it "hates public enterprise. It hates government-funded institutions of all kinds and I'm not sure it's not sympathetic to the privileged who would want to opt out [of the public education system]."

Caplan's lament for the fate of the Report in the hands of the Harris government raises a number of issues raised in the literature on royal commissions cited in Chapter 2, and some that are not. One of the more obvious points is that ultimately it is the government's prerogative to accept, reject, or modify any or all of the recommendations of a commission. The fate of RCOL's recommendations was significantly skewed by both the timing of and the results of a provincial election, first in Cooke's Ministry and then in Snobelen's. RCOL's recommendations, in this context, were like Pacific salmon swimming upriver to spawn, obstructed by hurdles of increasing magnitude. Significantly, the election of a new government imbued with a neo-conservative ideology and a strong "belt-tightening" agenda meant that many of RCOL's uncosted reforms would simply no longer be feasible. On an ideological level, major recommendations like ECE would be deemed unacceptable because they would have extended the reach of the public education system into the realm of activity that conservatives consider to be the exclusive responsibility of the family, an issue that was raised internally within RCOL mainly by Murphy but that was never dealt with as a serious issue worthy of inclusion in the argumentation for ECE. Similarly, the Harris government was much less sympathetic to the ethno-cultural and access goals of the previous government: one of Snobelen's first acts was to eliminate the assistant deputy-ministership for this role. Many of the equity-related recommendations by RCOL that addressed these issues, and that presumably would have found favour with Cooke in the long run, would subsequently meet with a negative response from the Snobelen ministry.

Caplan's reference to the spirit of the Report being violated by the Harris government is noteworthy in a respect not paid much attention to in the literature. On the one hand, his argument may be dismissed as the sour grapes of an individual whose political views are demonstrably at cross-purposes with those of the Harris government. His lament in this perspective may also be seen as an uncompromising demand to implement all the Report's recommendations, not just a few selected ones, or that the Harris government should forget trying to justify some aspects of its educational reform agenda using RCOL's findings as justification. But the larger issue here implicitly raised by Caplan is that in a complex piece of policy recommendations each major recommendation is interconnected with,

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and mutually supported by, other major recommendations. Pal (1992) defines policy as a "course of action or inaction chosen by authorities to address a given problem or interrelated set of problems." Caplan's case is that the set of RCOL recommendations should be viewed as an interrelated set of solutions. Examples of the interconnectedness of recommendations one could cite here are the relationship of the elimination of Grade 13/OAC to investing in pre-primary education and reinvigorating standards and curriculum from K to grade 12. Or to use an old phrase that seems to fit here: the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. In this view, it does not make much sense to treat the success or failure of a commission as a question of how many of its recommendations make it to policy stage, but rather how the recommendations fit into the overall meaning of the policy argumentation, and how the implementation of a recommendation jives with the purpose for which it was originally intended.

Further on this issue, Mawhinney (1993, p. 11) articulated the goal orientation of a policy in this fashion:

...The way in which a policy defines the problem it is intended to address provides a key to deciphering the meaning and the logic of policy. The definition of policy making as a problem-oriented activity recognizes that policies are goal oriented, and that there is a close relationship among the problems a policy defines and the goals it pursues.

On this point, one could cite the financing/funding issue, and how RCOL's funding proposals were dealt with by the Snobelen Ministry. One of the more controversial of RCOL's recommendations was to fundamentally alter the way the school system is financed. In simple terms, the province would assume control for much of tax assessment and collection, and distribute funding on an equal per-pupil basis, with necessary adjustments, throughout the components of the system. As mentioned earlier, this proposal garnered much criticism from big-city public boards that characterized this idea as a tax grab. The motivation behind this recommendation was laid out explicitly in the Report: to provide equitable funding to all components of the system. While Cooke's Ministry made no mention of this idea in the New Foundations and gave no indication of whether he would later address it, the Snobelen ministry did indicate its intention to act upon it, citing RCOL as its reference point. The question is: what motivated this decision? Given the overall cost-cutting agenda of the Snobelen ministry that removed $400,000,000 from 1996-97 school board budgets, with further cuts of a similar magnitude promised for the next year (CMEC, 1996, p.49), the centralization of taxation and funding fits in the
scenario of giving the provincial government the power to unilaterally cut the overall amounts of
funding available for public education and to decrease the overall funding on a per-pupil basis. While
RCOL's recommendation on funding was adopted, the purpose for which it is being presently utilized
is indeed contrary to the rationale given for this proposal by RCOL.

Snobelen's K to OAC reforms did eventually emerge in two different announcements in June,
1997, two years and six months after the release of the RCOL Report. For the elementary panel grades
1 to 8, the Snobelen Ministry's Ontario Curriculum largely abandoned the outcomes-based language
of the Common Curriculum that RCOL maintained should be built upon. Instead, a clear set of goals
was articulated for each grade level, specifying which learning objectives should be attained at each
grade level. In mathematics and language arts, the new curriculum standards called for the teaching
of certain knowledges and skills in lower grades than was the expectation in the earlier curriculum. The
new standards also revived the notion that students not attaining grade objectives could be retained
in that grade, if educators deem it necessary; this runs counter to the trend of "continuous progress"
that had been an ingrained part of Ontario public education since the 1970s. Applauding the new
retention policy was John Bachmann, president of the parent-led Organization For Quality Education
who observed: "One reason for clearer expectations is that they help parents and teachers intervene
as soon a student stumbles. Besides, asking a child to work at a level they find impossible isn't fair to
them or anyone in the classroom" (Maclean's, July 1, 1997, p. 102). The new curriculum left the
question of teaching methodology to the teachers. Undoubtedly, if Ontario students continue to show
what Snobelen called "mediocre" results on assessment instruments such as the Third International
Mathematics and Science study (1997), one can predict a stronger role for MET in prescribing what
teaching methods are considered more effective. This move would undoubtedly drive a final nail into
the coffin of the notion of policy interdependence (Manzer, 1994), enshrining policy tutelage or an
even stronger administrative agency as the mode of educational policy making in Ontario. This trend
was not lost on the president of the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation, who summarized the
Snobelen initiatives in hyperbolic fashion: "This is a government that wants to legislate the exact hour
of the exact day a child will know where to place a comma" (Maclean's, July 1, 1997, p.102). Centralized assessments, as recommended by RCOL and initiated by the Cooke Ministry, will be
refined in the Ontario Curriculum to ascertain whether teachers have been successful in leading their
charges to attain goals. At the elementary level, Snobelen's curriculum standards and other reforms seem less in keeping with RCOL's recommendations and more in spirit with the positions staked out in the public hearings by groups like the Organization for Quality Education whose views were largely screened out of the internal deliberations process. The new model of choice for standards and assessment was not that presented by RCOL, according to Snobelen, but rather the curriculum and standards approach that is already in place in public education in Alberta, where student achievement on a battery of international tests consistently ranks at the top of Canadian performance (The Globe, June 16, 1997, p. A14).

The secondary panel changes also placed the weight on new and tougher standards. The elimination of Grade 13 is to be delayed by one year to allow for ease of implementation. Grade 9 is to be restreamed, reversing the ideologically-driven 1993 decision of the NDP government, an initiative that RCOL did not challenge. Beginning in September 1999, with Grade 9, students will need to obtain 30 credits of 110 hours each to earn a high school diploma in four years, not in the present five years, a reiteration of a policy initiative taken by Cooke, and recommended by RCOL. More emphasis will be placed on career-educating programs or workplace experience, and grade 11 students will be given a literacy test, both of which were recommended by RCOL. Mark inflation will be curbed by new student transcripts that will show all attempts and results achieved for Grades 11 and 12. As for funding, MET will assume full control of the system in January 1998, the same time as massive school board amalgamations and a reduced number of elected trustees come into effect; both of these reforms carry on Cooke's agenda, not RCOL's (The Toronto Star, June 20, 1997, p.A1). In short, Snobelen's Ontario Curriculum seems more in keeping with Cooke's agenda than with RCOL's, building on the notion of tougher province-wide curriculum standards and centralized assessment in the service of public accountability, and bringing back the value of efficiency into the fold as one of the core values of the public education system. The recommendations of RCOL that have survived in some form or another to become Ministry policy in two different governments are those changes to which Cooke was already committed, and that Snobelen decided to continue, while his Ministry cranked up the accountability and efficiency stakes.

To give further definition to his efficiency agenda in 1997, Snobelen appointed former Minister Cooke, who resigned his Legislature seat as a member of the NDP "second party" Opposition, and
Ann Vanstone, a former Metro Toronto school-board chairwoman, as co-chairs to the Education Improvement Commission. In September 1997, Cooke and Vanstone made a number of recommendations that they contend will make more efficient and effective use of teacher time: boosting student "contact" hours to reflect national averages, lengthening the school year by starting it in the last week of August and extending it to the end of June, and reducing by half the number of professional development days taken when students are in school. These moves would add ten more school days for elementary students per year and fifteen more for secondary students. The Commission also recommended more teaching time per day, and reduced teacher preparation periods more in line with national averages, an initiative that would affect the secondary panel the most. Finally, the Commission proposed allowing non-certificated specialists to work in guidance, sports, and technology (The Globe, Sept. 17, 1997, p. A14). Ontario teacher federations, most particularly the OSSTF, have served notice to Snobelen that they intend to fight the imposition of many of these recommendations, through Bill 160 which they regard as a violation of current collective agreements. Faced with a united front of opposition to Bill 160 by teacher federations who threatened a province-wide political action (illegal strike), Premier Mike Harris replaced John Snobelen as Minister on October 9, 1997, and appointed Dave Johnson, in the words of the Toronto Star "to smooth things over with Ontario teachers at war with [the Harris] government" (The Star, Oct. 11, 1997, p.A1). Johnson and the Harris government, however, refused to buckle under to pressure from teacher federations, opposition parties, and mushrooming parent protest groups to remove the offensive Bill. This stand-off prompted a two-week teachers' strike in late October and early November 1997, involving 120,000 educators and administrators in all components of the publicly-funded education system. Although the government subsequently used its legislative majority to push Bill 160 through to third reading and into legislation, teacher and parental protests promise to continue in other forms, including constitutionally-based court challenges to the validity of several of the Bill’s clauses. The consensus for educational reform that RCOLers claimed to have built, it must be concluded, has been broken asunder, crushed between the neo-conservative efficiency agenda of the government and the determination of teacher federations to maintain the status quo ante RCOL at any costs.
The Question of Impact Revisited

Before making a judgment about whether all the energy has been wrung out of RCOL recommendations through governmental attention and the lack of it, one should heed the advice of Murphy and Glaze, and of some of the literature, and take "the long-term view." At the policy level, a major recommendation like ECE might resurface as government policy when a change of governmental and public thinking and more generous fiscal conditions make a serious second look more feasible. Although ECE was not "invented" by RCOL, putting the idea in connection with the functions of public schooling, along the lines of France, was new, and the coverage devoted to the issue in the media afterwards would suggest that RCOL has nudged ECE a little further onto the public agenda, even if it is now on back-burner status. After all, RCOL recycled some stalled policy initiatives and recommendations from studies of the past; it is not inconceivable that some of RCOL's ideas will be repackaged at a future date.

On a broader scale, given that the Report's ideas and argumentation were distributed to a diverse audience, who is to say with dead certainty what RCOL's eventual impact might be? Tens of thousands of free sets of the Report were distributed to every school in the province and to government and political circles, and thousands more were purchased at various outlets. At MET, school-board, and school-levels, thousands of educators, as street-level bureaucrats and local policymakers in their own right, gave the Report a serious hearing upon its release, according to a number of graduate students/teachers who attended MET- or board-initiated information sessions and took part in school-level discussions. All teacher federations' house journals devoted one or more issues to presenting, analyzing, praising, and criticizing the Report in articles and opinion pieces frequently penned by their respective presidents and ranking officers. Officials from trustee and board-level associations also devoted a large chunk of print to inform their members of their reaction to the many recommendations, which if made policy, would have profoundly affected the things they do and the money that pays for them. Various interest, education reform, and parent groups held meetings and composed newsletters and fact sheets devoted to the Report's implications. Universities and faculties of education staged auditorium-sized forums, sometimes with a co-chair or commissioner as guest speaker, that were attended by a variety of individuals and groups including and beyond academe. And, for several weeks in the wake of the release, attendant media coverage was fairly intense,
blanketing an even wider web of readers. In the aftermath, Caplan has continued to maintain a media profile, plugging the Report and chastizing government inaction, both as an activist and an opinion-piece writer. For example, on Friday July 18, 1997, in a repeat broadcast of Television Ontario's (TVO) Parent Contact phone-in show, Caplan argued that parent councils should not have decision-making powers, while Maureen Somers, a parent affiliated with the Organization for Quality Education, contended that present councils should have the power to hire and fire school principals and make curriculum and budget decisions. On Saturday July 19, 1997, three writers of letters to the editor in the Toronto Globe (p. A15) criticized Caplan for his earlier letter in which he criticized both the printed views of Editor-in-Chief Willliam Thorsell deploring the present state of the educational system and the agenda of the Snobelen Ministry.

Amid the cut and thrust of Caplan's polemics, educational stakeholders may ponder the Report's arguments at a more leisurely pace than was afforded to them during the flurry of the Report's release and the reaction of the Cooke Ministry within the space of two months.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In Chapter 7, I have analyzed the various purposes or functions that RCOLers and Minister Cooke felt the Commission served in its short lifetime. These included evaluation, two divergent views of consensus-making, policy advice, research, political, and cathartic bully-pulpit. To provide some context for this analysis, I included a sampling of media and stakeholder reaction to For the Love of Learning, and an outline of Minister Cooke's New Foundations. I concluded this discussion with a consideration of the long-term impact of the Commission. In Chapter 8, I proceed to analyze the findings on RCOL as an organizational structure.
CHAPTER 8 - CONSTRUCTING THE ORGANIZATION

RCOL's structure or organization was a piece in a construction process that started its evolution on May 4, 1993 and was not completed until mid-January 1995. On that May day in 1993, the commissioners met as strangers, the nucleus of an organization that would be staffed in fluxes of individuals from diverse backgrounds, a few of whom stayed the duration, and many whose presence is better measured in weeks. One of the commissioners' more important roles was to inquire into the state of public education, engage in public consultations, and write a report within a given time frame. These tasks were the givens of the mandate, but how they would be fulfilled, what the content of those tasks would entail, who should do what, and how it was to be coordinated, was to be defined and contested throughout the process. If the subject matter that RCOL was to study was laced with uncertainties, ambiguities, and conflicts, its mirror image was to be found within the structure of RCOL, in its adhocery, roles, culture, and learning capacity as an organization.

"Structure" is used here as Mintzberg (1979) developed the concept: the way in which organizational members divide and coordinate tasks. Associated with the term structure are specific design variables and coordinating mechanisms that form a particular pattern or structural configuration in ways that could be used to compare one type of organization with another. In Chaper 9, I again address RCOL as an organization, using the approach developed by Greenfield (1993).

Perhaps the pithiest statement about RCOL comes from Researcher F (Interview, 1995), who when asked to describe the experience of working within the Commission, exclaimed:

[Working in the Commission] was so intense an experience, much of what went on remains formless, blurred in my mind. It was all consuming and characterized by adhocery...It's difficult to distinguish the landscape, the pressures were so intense. It's difficult to reflect on these things.

ADHOCERY

Adhocery, as a description for a type of organizational behaviour, has been entrenched in the literature for a generation but it still exhibits a fashionable cachet, thanks to its association with organizational forms favoured by newer high-tech firms (Mintzberg, 1979). Adhocery in simple terms
may be defined as a "reliance on temporary solutions rather than consistent, long-term plans," a usage that Webster's (1991, p.17) dates from 1960 to 1965. What this definition implies is that temporary solutions require unique approaches to problems, and that pre-planned or standardized solutions are unable to fulfill this need. If adhocery describes an organizational approach, the use of the term "adhocracy", as coined by Toffler (1970), applies to a type of organization in which adhocery is the dominant form of behaviour by core members. The level of adhocery within such an organization is rarely a constant and its place on a continuum varies according to the nature of the environment and of its work domain, as well as reflecting the disposition of its members (Mintzberg, 1979, pp. 431-437).

The literature cited in Chapter 2 would suggest that royal commissions are not necessarily adhocracies, and that the degree of adhocery within them is highly variable. On the one hand, Cairns (1990) and Cameron (1993) presented portrayals of commissions that were highly adhocratic. The following quote from Cairns' (1990) is a faithful reflection of the descriptions from Webster's (1991) and Mintzberg (1979):

Each royal commission commences with a clean slate. There are no bureaucratic memories and no old hands to educate newcomers in the genre's workings. Thus, each stage in the life of a royal commission is a new challenge, the response to which is not preplanned or predictable. For its major activities - the hearings, research and report writing - there is no routinization, for they are not cyclically repeated activities following the seasons or the budget year, but are only experienced once. (Cairns, 1990, p.91)

On the other hand, Smith and Patterson (1994) suggested a picture of a commission that is organized much more in keeping with a standardized bureaucracy, in which a commission is structured largely as an autonomous branch or project of the civil service. From a government perspective, all royal commissions are ad hoc, not necessarily adhocratic, because they are temporary organizations, given life by governments to which commissions usually submit a report, with finite constraints to their public powers stipulated in the Order-In-Council that establishes the mandate. These temporal limits can be narrowed even further by a threatened government.

RCOL was drawn to a high-degree of adhocery for a number of reasons raised. The general environment around RCOL was uncertain, complex, and dynamic, and initially hostile, a situation that often undergirds the genesis of an adhocracy (Mintzberg, 1979, p. 431). Stakeholders questioned the
Commission's credibility and the efficacy of the school system in general, and the fate of its Report was to be assigned to a Ministry whose authority was in jeopardy, and to a government whose low standings in opinion polls did not auger well for an upcoming election. To survive in that type of environment forced the commissioners to initiate strategies for political mobilization and for influencing the media, strategies that needed to be adapted to the various life-cycles of the Commission. The subject matter before the Commission, interlaced with contested values and unclear technologies, was generally an ill-defined domain. Education is not a hard science; it is a domain of the arts, the social sciences, and of politics, parents, and public values, with a pedagogical discourse rooted in Plato and Aristotle (Billig et al., 1988). Hence education reflects a loose connection between cause and effect and between problem and solution, although the degree of tightness/looseness on specific issues is subject to on-going debate by advocates, critics, and analysts. What is important here is the commissioners were of the mind set that the problems before them were generally loosely-structured and interconnected, not easily ameliorated by discrete cause-and-effect solutions. Within RCOL, problems, issues, and solutions could only be identified and interpreted through a long exhaustive process, the means and outcomes of which were only vaguely discerned by members at the beginning of the process. The commitment of the commissioners to go beyond the mandate and to inject the process with their own creativity and innovation pushed RCOL into an even more ill-defined context. Unwilling to accept simple solutions to complex problems, and not universally versed in domain-specific expertise, most commissioners began the process near the bottom of a steep learning curve, and they pulled their organization with them, to explore divergent thinking. The need to innovate, and an ambiguous core technology, are also hallmarks of an adhocracy (Mintzberg, 1979, p. 432). Like the topic of national unity, grappling with educational issues within RCOL was often an exercise in "shovelling fog" (Cameron, 1993).

RCOL was composed of an array of individuals, including two executive directors, with no experience in a royal commission except for the co-chairs, and for most of these individuals the succession of tasks unique to a commission was largely unknown territory. While researchers were more familiar with domain-specific knowledge than some commissioners, the organization in which they worked was a puzzle that was reassembled and rejigged a number of times over nineteen months. As one researcher remarked:
I've never worked in such an environment. All these people hadn't worked together before, they came into empty offices and started to get used to one another just as the new executive director arrived [in September 1994] and the work culture changed again (Researcher F, 1995).

RCOLers were transient knowledge workers in a transient organization, performing many tasks on a one-off basis, and when they left the organization, their collective knowledge about RCOL was scattered as they returned to other, often more stable, organizational contexts. In Mintzberg's terms (1979) RCOL was a temporary public operating adhocracy, with both commissioners and researchers intimately engaged in the core tasks related to the construction of public knowledge, multiple purposes, and the structure itself, assisted by a small administrative support unit. This work was underwritten by RCOL's main "client," the government of Premier Bob Rae through the agency of the Minister of Education and Training, Dave Cooke.

The hearings and other public consultations, the construction of knowledge through internal deliberations and the writing process, were all different tasks that had to be learned by people whose backgrounds and viewpoints were divergent, and each cycle of the process required a realignment of what people did, the development of which was largely left to mutual adjustment, collectively in liaison devices such as commissioner and researcher meetings and through untold interactions by individuals, both hallmarks of adhocracies (Mintzberg, p. 431). Extensive mutual adjustment was necessary because RCOL had neither job descriptions for tasks and roles that would go as quickly as they came, nor plans that could adequately predict and standardize the work process.

We were in a project mode. There wasn't much time to worry about the organization, with so many divergent viewpoints we could strive for coexistence at best. It was task-oriented, high intensity, high stress, aiming for the best product. Personal comfort and niceties were not always there; it was a culture of working very hard. (Di Cecco, Interview, 1995)

This description by the executive director also introduces another aspect of the adhocracy, a high degree of politicization that made RCOL an uncomfortable place to work:

Coupling its ambiguities with its interdependencies, Adhocracy emerges as the most politicized of the five structural configurations. No structure can be more Darwinian than the Adhocracy- more supportive of the fit, as long as they remain fit, and more destructive of the weak. (Mintzberg, 1979, p. 462)
RCOL's politicization was complicated not simply because of the imperatives of expertise and of task-related jostling, but also because, as a public organization, political interests and values were at stake, and because political bias helped to stimulate and constrain member interaction.

The combination of confrontation and epiphany as catalysts for organizational action conform to the notion of a "galvanizing event" that played a similar role in some other commissions (Cameron, 1993; Simeon, 1987). The common context is a looming deadline that forces some action, and a commitment by members that the deadline will be respected. Within RCOL, the impetus for action was largely internally-defined, a product of the confluence of the micropolitical (researcher confrontation) and cognitive streams (Pauline epiphany) within the organization at a critical juncture. The notion of a galvanizing event, and diminishing time, as a signal experience in several commissions, including RCOL, might suggest that learning needs, cognitive overload, and internal stalemate tend to grind commission momentum to a halt and that typical means for coordinating activities, such as liaison devices in the form of researcher and commissioner meetings, are insufficient to propel the level of creativity and focus that commissions need to muster within a relatively short time-frame. These design variables for mutual adjustment, when coupled with extensive informal mutual adjustment, pose a particular problem for an adhocracy. Because communication eats up so much organizational time, inefficiency is often rampant (Mintzberg, 1979, p. 463). In RCOL's case, this particular application of micropolitical activity partially compensated for the ineffectiveness of other design variables and coordinating mechanisms. This perspective might also suggest that micropolitical activity in commissions may serve positive, functional purposes and that it should not necessarily be construed as a "major problem of ambiguity, the politicization of the [Adhocracy] structure" (Mintzberg, 1979, p.462). On occasion, politicization within RCOL presented a solution to organizational ambiguity.

If RCOL's legacy is its Report, the "core technologies" evolved to produce this document were characterized less by a systematic problem and solution finding and more by an adhocratic ambiguity driven by a welter of factors. The internal deliberation process and the writing process were riddled by dilemma and paradox: dead certainties and foggy ambiguities; an uneasy juxtaposition of principles and pragmatism; arbitrarily ad hoc but rarely fluid; a rough-and-tumble democracy and a formidable hierarchy; an open forum for the discussion of ideas and an arena where bias was marked; some draft chapters were vigorously criticized, while others were shielded; an open contestation of wills and
covert subversion; the inclusion of preferences and the exclusion of some voices; a contest of endurance and stamina, the winners and losers of which were largely pre-ordained; and the writing process was the most labour-intensive activity within RCOL mismatched by the time available for the task and a dwindling number of individuals to carry it out. Such circumstances created a high level of ambiguity within RCOL, and sustained ambiguity of this type made the work atmosphere more taxing for some members than others, another problem associated with highly-adhocratic organizations (Mintzberg, 1979, pp. 460-461).

March and Olsen (1989) contend that institutionally-defined SOPs (standard operating procedures), rule-bound behaviour, and collective organizational cultures reduce ambiguity and spur institutional action. At the same time, these authors emphasize that inter- and intra- organizational reality remains "potentially rich in conflict, contradiction and ambiguity" (p.38).

March and Olsen (1989) define rule-bound behaviour as "routines, procedures, convention, roles, strategies, organizational forms, and technologies around which political activity is constructed" (p. 22). An adhocratic commission such as RCOL, on the other hand, often starts with a "clean slate" (Cairns, 1990), prompting the question: What SOPs and rule-bound behaviours could RCOL invoke to reduce ambiguity and spur organizational action? In this context, war stories from Caplan and Bégin, and from visiting former commissioners, about their commission experiences were a shadowy substitute for in-house generated organizational knowledge: the contexts, mandates, time-lines, funding, personalities, and subject domains vary widely from commission to commission, and do not allow for significant cross-organizational learning, though some of the more routine aspects can probably benefit from some sort of cross-pollination (Cameron, 1993; Smith and Patterson, 1994). The short answer here is that rule-bound behaviour within a commission such as RCOL must be constructed "on-the-fly" to some degree, to recall a favourite phrase of the late Canadian hockey announcer Foster Hewitt. A corollary of this reality is that a commission's quotient of ambiguity, contradiction, intra-organizational conflict, and political activity is an unknown and large quantity, because a royal commission may lack the constraints posed by a well-entrenched, institutionally-defined, rule-bound behaviour to socialize its members. Within RCOL, the clash of political interests and values, micropolitical activity, and the exercise of bias, all coalesced to articulate the unwritten but taken-for-granted rules of the game that, paradoxically, pushed forward and impeded the
organization, and unified and divided commissioner and researcher thinking, loyalties, and actions.

ADHOCRATIC ROLES

Generally speaking, roles in adhocracies are much more fluid and amorphous than those associated with more bureaucratic forms of organization:

To innovate means to break away from established patterns. So the innovative organization cannot rely on any form of standardization for coordination. In other words, it must avoid all the trappings of bureaucratic structure, notably sharp divisions of labour, extensive unit differentiation, highly formalized behaviours, and an emphasis on planning and control systems. (Mintzberg, 1979, p. 433).

Roles within RCOL were defined by a high degree of adhocery, not simply related to the need to innovate, but also because the amorphous work terrain, coupled with the lack of strategic direction about where they were headed and how to get there, pulled RCOLers to shoot the arrow and then paint the target around it, to paraphrase the words of a researcher. In other words, improvisation was the main mode of work as RCOLers groped their way through layers of organizational darkness. With improvisation, roles are evolved through experimentation, not fixed through prescription. By comparison, roles within the commissions cited in Chapter 2 seem much more stable (Cameron, 1993; Cairns, 1990; Simeon, 1987). This adhocery characterized both commissioner and researcher roles, although researchers' roles had an edge in adhocery, for a number of reasons.

Roles within RCOL were unclear from the beginning, and remained so until disbandment. Bégin, for example, agreed to be the chair of the Commission but was informed just before the Order-In-Council was issued that she would be sharing that role with Caplan. Paradoxically, Bégin contended (Interview, 1995), clarifying roles might have led to disaster:

Roles were never clarified. I was there full-time never knowing what to do, my co-chair was in Ottawa except for meetings which he never attended fully. I never knew what I was doing: I was busy and never stopped working. I found that very difficult and think that was a problem vis à vis the staff. During the entire time of the Commission, things were kept deliberately unclear [about our relationship with MET and about internal relationships] but things might have exploded if they were clarified. I don't ever want to work like that again, I don't know why it was never clarified. There were lots of grey areas...It was the worst experience of my professional life.

The role differentiation among commissioners was also problematic; although frequently

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referred in the media as full-time (co-chairs) and part-time (three commissioners), there was little
difference in the hours worked or the responsibilities shared by four of the five commissioners. The
decision taken to ensure a quorum of commissioners for approval of major issues meant that decision-
making by committee was dominant, and that the co-chairs possessed no decision-making clout
independent of the commissioners. The control of the budget by the executive director on behalf of
MET also meant that co-chairs had limited discretion about hiring staff, planning research budgets,
or planning special activities, capacities they had enjoyed in previous commission experience. Given
the demonstrable inter-personal conflict among the commissioners, decision-making by committee
would prove difficult, if not impossible. If the formal decision-making apparatus would not allow quick
and authoritative interventions, it stood to reason that individual, ad hoc, and informal interventions
would pick up the slack. Cajoling, pressuring, intransigence, and blocking were some of the fruits of
this commissioner stalemate.

The leadership factor was complicated in RCOL by two MET decisions. The first of these was
the decision of Minister Cooke, on the eve of the appointment of the Commission, to appoint two co-
chairs instead of one chair. Bégin (Interview, 1995) claimed that, from her experience as a federal
minister, dividing authority at the top was unworkable. Within RCOL, having two strong-willed and
independent-minded individuals as co-chairs would work only if at least one of the following
conditions was fulfilled: a) both co-chairs were in substantial agreement on the issues; b) their
personalities meshed, allowing for an informal, amicable resolution of substantive issues; c) co-chairs
worked out compromises that allowed one co-chair’s preferences to be acceded to, in exchange for
future reciprocity; and d) one co-chair would agree to allow the other to be de facto chair for the
duration. None of these conditions prevailed for any consistent block of time within RCOL.

Bégin (Interview, 1995) thought that the composition and structure of the Commission
inhibited co-chair influence, and contributed to a distrustful divisive climate. This view holds that the
exercise of commissioner power was a zero-sum game, in which even the choice of colour for a
tablecloth would be occasioned by prolonged, collective hand-wringing:

People did not trust each other. We never succeeded in creating a safe space for people
to speak. The group dynamics were not intelligently built...The structure of five
commissioners is a good figure, but the appointment of just one student made it difficult.
Manisha was not equal to adults in terms of life experience and she was scared to death
by the fights of the four adults. We were left with four adults, two full-time, two part-time, and there were no winners; it never worked. The two other commissioners denied the two co-chairs any power: we even fought over the colour of the tablecloth used in the hearings!...Two co-chairs equals no co-chairs unless they're twins from the same egg.

A second MET decision that had a profound impact on leadership was the decision to replace the original executive director (Hutcheon), who returned to MET in a new role as assistant deputy minister, with another (di Cecco) in August 1993. This meant that both commissioners and researchers had to make a critical adjustment to a key player on the cusp of a major period of activity, and vice versa, with very little time to work out the "niceties," as the second executive director phrased it (Di Cecco, Interview, 1995). With a fragile collective culture at best, RCOL had to re-calibrate itself at a critical juncture, prompted by MET.

Thus the leadership role within RCOL was assumed by a committee of commissioners, with the executive director performing executive and coordinating roles vis-à-vis the support staff and the researchers. The reflections of Mintzberg (1979) on the roles of the "strategic apex" or top managers within an adhocracy help to pinpoint some role-related problems within RCOL:

The Adhocracy [his capitalization] combines organic working arrangements instead of bureaucratic ones with expert power instead of formal authority. Together these conditions breed aggressiveness and conflict. But the job of the top managers is not to bottle up that aggressiveness...but to channel it to productive ends. Thus, in performing the leader and disturbance handler roles, the top manager of the Adhocracy (as well as those in its middle line) must be a master of human relations, able to use persuasion, negotiation, coalition, reputation, rapport, or whatever to fuse the individualistic experts into smoothly functioning...teams. (p. 447)

The obvious problem for RCOL was the absence of a top manager to perform these leader and disturbance handler roles with any degree of authority, as these roles were diffused first between co-chairs, and again among the commissioners. Assuming disturbance-handler roles was inherently problematic because the commissioners could not often find agreement on matters large and small. Moreover, attending to these roles would seem predicated on the premise that the individuals so tasked would be a consistent fixture in the organizational firmament. In RCOL's case, commissioners would float in and out of the process, and their frequent absences meant that particularly the disturbance handling role would be downloaded to the executive director.

Several researchers within RCOL complained that the lack of leadership was a major constraint
to internal deliberations and the learning process and their views enrich our knowledge of the roles that
the commissioners performed or were expected to perform. The charge of lack of leadership was laid
at the door-step of the commissioners in general and the co-chairs in particular. Leadership was
conceived as having two key roles: intellectual and management. The following quotes, from two
different researchers (Interviews, 1995) respectively deal with two types of leadership and the
perception that more was expected on this front:

The co-chairs didn't take a leadership role, especially an intellectual leadership role, or in
setting a direction, and this left a vacuum that no one person wanted to fill. I've worked
in other complex and messy places but there was always some intellectual leadership
particularly about direction. We instead got five different responses on almost every issue.
It would have helped if the co-chairs had educational expertise, but the critical issue was
their lack of intellectual leadership, with too often a vacuum of ideas.

I think the major constraint was the indecisiveness and disorganization of the
commissioners. It was never made clear what was needed and when or what time line you
were working to. They didn't have any kind of serious schedule that they could share with
us. Despite their personalities they could have taken a big swallow earlier on and said to
themselves: "We can't be prima donnas here, we need to commit ourselves to working
together." They didn't do this. I felt like they were our problem rather than a solution. I
found the other people on the research team to be really helpful, who rarely got in my
way. With commissioners it was often the opposite: I was conscious I was working for
them, but they didn't make it easy.

Intellectual leadership in a commission entails overseeing and giving direction to the flow of: the
hearings process and the tone and substance of inquiry; issue identification; the swirl of values and
ideas; research activity; interpretation; and decision-making about what to say in a report and how it
should be said, however "dimly perceived," "ambiguous," and "uncertain" all of these elements may
first appear (Cairns, 1990, p.91). The other function of leadership is management or executive,
overseeing a complex, fast-paced organization. While many of the latter tasks can be, and usually are,
delegated to an executive director, the ultimate responsibility resides with the (co)-chair(s).

The added complication within a public policy-oriented commission like RCOL is that the
different major phases of a commission require a different set of leadership and management skills.
Ideally, the public hearings require skills of a quasi-judicial nature, and a hardy dose of physical
stamina, in maintaining a respectful decorum and patiently listening to and responding to oral
presentations, and a professional politician's grasp of the arts of media relations. Internal deliberations
require high-level skills in the arts of oral discussion and a probing intellect, and the temperament to endure hours, days, and weeks, of the cut-and-thrust of debate about often contentious issues, and a thorough understanding of issues or a commitment to learn them. The writing phase demands all the skills of policy analyst with an eye for the big picture and for fine detail, the politician's feel for bargaining and compromise, and the persuasive powers of a public intellectual whose ability to take the strategic view, and whose insight and judgment, as well as skills in extended argumentation, are due for imminent and intimate scrutiny in the form of a published report. The post-release phase invokes high-level political and media skills in "selling" a report's contents to the responsible minister, stakeholders, media, and the public. Through all these phases the sundry needs of the commissioners, researchers, and support staff also require constant attention, and inter-personal skills are at a premium.

Several researchers asserted that co-chair personal factors were critical reasons why leadership was hobbled within RCOL, and that these factors outweighed structural factors (e.g., decision-making by committee) or professional background factors as prime determinants in the way the process unfolded. As Researcher G noted above, the "prima donna" factor meant that the co-chairs were not generally on speaking terms with each other early on in the process and that co-chair relationships with other commissioners were often bruising, and thus characterized by less communication, mutual adjustment, and cooperation than one might otherwise expect for an organization that was so heavily reliant on informal means for discussion and for agreement about tasks While some researchers described the "prima donna" factor as a reflection of the lack of interpersonal skills on the part of co-chairs, some others described this proclivity as the consequence of an obdurate exercise of personal will and of micropolitical posturing and positioning.

The role of the executive director was also complex, with differing, if not conflicting, roles emerging: operations manager, disturbance handler, micropolitical manager, mediator, gatekeeper, enforcer, and advocate of her own preferences for inclusion in the Report. Under the press of very imminent deadlines, the second executive director performed all these roles, although not all at the same time. The executive director played the major role as chief operational manager, working closely with support staff to ensure that all the logistical and budgetary pieces were in place for a variety of tasks, from the support and travel arrangements related to public hearings, all the way through to
coordinating all the inputs that went into the design and production of the Report. The role of disturbance handling and micropolitical manager was probably the most difficult role as the level of conflict and ambiguity in RCOL was always in steady supply, with more peaks than valleys. "Keeping a lid on it" involved her in three sets of interventions. The first of these was to act as a go-between for co-chairs who did not work well together, smoothing frequently ruffled feathers and working out schedules and commitments for commissioner time that the co-chairs could commit to. This activity required much walking on egg shells: she could not afford to alienate either co-chair, each co-chair, or a combination of them, could have made her life within RCOL much more difficult and her future posting at MET less certain, if either one suspected she was the agent of the other. "The executive director had the difficult task of getting the Report out on time, but she couldn't afford to alienate the co-chairs" (Researcher B, Interview, 1995). Despite the diffuseness in decision-making power among commissioners, the co-chairs were the key players who had to be kept on a semi-even keel at all costs; if a particular "part-time" commissioner chose to stew over an issue, this was most often a problem of a lesser magnitude to the executive director, to be attended to or not.

The second micropolitical role at the executive director level related to attending to co-chair and commissioner related conflict and distrust, and ensuring that the level of inter-commissioner friction did not threaten the organization with implosion. This required vigilance at commissioner meetings in steering the debate between the shoals of rancour and ad hominem attacks, and the assuaging of bruised egos in private offices.

The third micropolitical interventions of the executive director were related to mediating conflict between commissioners and researchers. The April 1994 confrontation between the co-chairs and three researchers would suggest that she was only partially successful in this endeavour, as some researchers saw confrontation as their only option to push the organization forward. The executive director played a gatekeeper role particularly concerning the commissioner-researcher nexus, although certain researchers had direct connections to commissioners and could obviate her at will. In gatekeeping, what information was to be passed to the commissioners from researchers, the degree of researcher access to commissioners, and which researchers would be allowed to attend commissioner meetings, were often decided by the executive director. She was also the frequent interpreter of co-chair and commissioner intent to researchers, about their current thinking and the
internal evolution of commissioner conflict. The executive director was also the enforcer of a hierarchy that was a product of co-chair bias, a role that did not endear her to researchers adversely affected. To some researchers, this activity placed the executive director in the co-chairs' camp, and was an exploitation of her authority at the expense of equal treatment of researchers. This perceived transgression, in the eyes of some researchers, compromised her role as mediator. As the writing process was reaching its climax in the fall of 1994, the executive director also emerged as an advocate with her own agenda for educational reform, trying to get her preferences included, not unlike commissioners, in one-to-one meetings with key researchers who resisted what they felt was a violation of the agreed upon process. Although the role of the executive director called for a mediating role in the micropolitical struggles within RCOL, she was also enmeshed in it as a player in her own right.

The following three excerpts from my observation notes give a flavour of researcher meetings, highlighting the important role that the executive director played as a "micropolitical" manager, protecting and influencing the commissioners, and counselling the researchers to refrain from conflict-inducing behaviour. She tried a number of different tactics to achieve these ends: advising researchers to avoid conflicts with the commissioners, interpreting commissioner preferences, moods, and hang-ups, and urging the researchers to focus the commissioners at the macro-level and to steer them away from the micro-level. By April 1994, however, the notes tell us that the commissioners, from the researchers' perspectives, were not willing to be steered in any direction, except one of their own choosing, an understanding that drove the three senior researchers to confront the co-chairs at the April Learning Partnership conference.

Notes: January 24, 1994 - Di Cecco: On the role of researchers vis à vis commissioners, when it comes time for them to make a decision, we should pull back and let them do it. The researcher working on Spotlight 2 feels shafted by the commissioners, complaining they are not honouring decisions made earlier on its content. Di Cecco: The commissioners have a natural curiosity but they fluctuate between feeling confident and panicking. A researcher: We need to move ahead on the agenda. Di Cecco: Some commissioners have strong views; we should get them to focus at the macro-level, not micro-level. Don't let them get sucked into tangential questions. Researchers should draw out critical choice points.

March 30 - Di Cecco: Try to avoid conflict with the commissioners. Focus them on the
issues that matter. Ultimately you will have to write drafts of the chapters. There are serious problems with the report outline, it was rather spontaneously written. A researcher: I don't care about the outline, I'd rather do chunks of writing and force the [commissioners] to respond. Di Cecco: My concern is that time will run out and you will have power alliances within the commissioners that you don't want. Caplan doesn't think we will finish on time and he wants more funding for the extension of deadline, but I think that RCOL will lose credibility if we don't deliver on time. A researcher: We should write position papers and let the commissioners respond to them. The commissioners ask questions but don't listen to the answers.

April 18 - A researcher: The commissioners can't back off anymore! A second researcher: It's a terrible misuse of our time! A third researcher: I'll make up an outline of researcher arguments for the commissioners. This report can't cover the waterfront but should talk about what can be expected of schools, and what they can't be doing. A fourth researcher: We need to push them, it's a difficult process! Di Cecco: Yes, because there's no groupthink among commissioners. A fifth researcher: Let's not get them to retreat! Di Cecco: We need tight management: the co-chairs react better when you're not tentative. If researchers have questions among themselves in front of the commissioners, it doesn't work well: get your position ready collectively.

For researchers, roles changed over time, and roles and hierarchical distance blurred for some. Work technologies and tasks changed abruptly with each phase of the Commission, and multi-tasking was the norm for researchers. Researchers were scribes at the hearings, assemblers of research-related material and coordinators of commissioned research, writers of discussion papers during the internal deliberations process, and some were writers of substantial chunks of the Report. The writing role was thrust upon researchers by default and evolution rather than formal expectation.

One researcher (Interview, 1995) described how an ambiguous role changed to one with clearer definition:

I didn't know what my role was supposed to be, it was all ambiguous...RCOL was short of people who could take stuff, make sense of it, and put it in writing. I didn't expect to inherit all sorts of areas I didn't have expertise in to write about. My role did change primarily because there were not enough people who could write.

Another researcher (Interview, 1995) also spoke of role ambiguity and role change, and the negotiation of a new role:

It was very vague. Initially the commissioners were thinking they would have a research director who would have major responsibility for all of research and that person would contract out bits and pieces. I said I didn't know anything about teacher education...and
they realized that if no one person knows all aspects, they would have to hire more than one person; we had the same experience with governance.

My initial understanding of my job was to supply commissioners with any information they requested and if not requested to provide information they needed to help them understand an issue and to arrive at a position. I thought I would write outlines and drafts of arguments; I didn't think I would write chapters, that was not my anticipation. I thought I would be contributing to a backgrounder-type binder. I thought I would talk to the commissioners more than I did...Such discussions were rare because commissioners were often not [at 101 Bloor St. West], and when there their time was very limited. They often spent time on organizational and administrative matters rather than on substance; either they didn't value each other as informants or they avoided such discussions because they would get into fights.

The title of "researcher" was inaccurate to describe that role: much of the work consisted of a type of policy research, not "pure" research, but the compilation of research done by others, and the role of scribe at the hearings. This role gave way, largely by a process of default, to that of primary authors of much of the Report, as Researcher F (Interview, 1995) explained:

Very few researchers had research skills: what we did was a mixture of policy research, ordinary research, and policy analysis. Policy research meant going beyond what you could prove by research, having to weigh evidence, link it to preferred directions, taking into account the political and public context. It was not a pure research role, but rather making sense, given all these factors.

The "senior" researchers took on an additional role, that of micropolitical managers, trying to promote co-chair leadership, and articulating the collective interests of the researchers. "Senior" is in quotation marks because most researchers did not know until the end of the process that the three researchers who had confronted the co-chairs had been upgraded in status by the latter, an indication of role ambiguity even among researchers. Some researchers tried to promote co-chair cooperation, here articulated by Researcher F (Interview, 1995): "By April 1994 we began to tell commissioners what their role should be, especially concerning the roles of the co-chairs and the need for intellectual leadership". A researcher (Interview, 1995) also spoke of researcher micropolitical management:

RCOL operated as a messy democracy with a tendency at times to get into alliances among the commissioners. Bégin and Murphy were a little grouping together at times. I tried to push Caplan and Bégin together, to be stronger leaders, but it didn't work.

The researchers were less a team and more a collection of individuals who coordinated their
work on an ad hoc basis as time constraints and personal inclinations allowed. Most researcher work was done individually with weak coordination, as described by Researcher B (Interview, 1995): "The research team was organized first by individual portfolio, and only secondly as a team...Research was not a team effort primarily." This researcher said that schedules never lasted, and projected time lines were rarely accurate. Coordination of the work was "mostly informal, walking into one another's offices and much E-mailing. In coordination, the role of researchers' personalities played a big role, as some more than others were disposed to inviting feedback."

Researcher G (Interview, 1995) also described the research team as a self-directed group of individuals who coordinated the work largely through a process of mutual adjustment:

The research team was left to us more or less to organize. We did meet regularly though not often. Mostly we were a kind of self-managed group, except for meetings with the executive director. We made decisions among ourselves and as individuals would get together with one or more colleagues. We didn't work as a team but got on well with each other, we appreciated that we needed one another, and sought each other out. We often worked independently rather than sitting down and dividing the work up.

Researcher A maintained that much work was divided and coordinated largely by the researchers themselves, with no role for a director of research. The writing process pushed to the limits RCOL's reliance upon informal coordination and mutual adjustment, for the commissioners and the researchers alike, leading to in and out groups among researchers, the early departure of several researchers, and role conflict between remaining researchers and commissioners:

With twenty chapters and seven researchers, you take the lead on one chapter and share with others. There was a willingness to create a research team but there was no one head of research to coordinate. As time went on, some researchers got pushed out, and an inner and outer circle of researchers developed. Three researchers ended up doing most of the work largely by default and also on the basis of their availability and willingness to do the work. Much to their credit the Report did get written. There wasn't much clarity concerning what we were supposed to be doing: we wrote until we dropped, only to have our worked picked apart by the commissioners. I was used to having my work edited, but this was vivisection performed by the commissioners. Two or three researchers got fired this way. The organization worked in opposition to synergy, the whole wasn't greater than the sum of the parts. The five commissioners were bright people but they didn't have a conductor to make it into a band, they were all playing different tunes. Researchers became writers and became de facto commissioners; they ended up setting the agenda, with all the accompanying punishment that went with that too. (Researcher A, Interview, 1995)
Researcher F (Interview, 1995) said that while some aspects of RCOL's work lent themselves to a clear division of labour, researchers' work became even more difficult to parcel out because of researcher "meltdown":

The division of labour worked well for some aspects of RCOL's work, like communication. For the work of the research team it was more difficult, more like emergent planning. People who did good work got more and more, those not so good got less work.

Researcher C (Interview, 1995) maintained that in such an emergent environment, with such fluidity of tasks, the work did not follow a bureaucratic process, and a researcher's relevance was in proportion to the individual initiative expended:

If you sat back and waited for the commissioners to give you a task, you wouldn't have gotten the right task for you. You had to be proactive, not like [some researchers]. The commissioners would have accepted [your contribution] after the fact, but you had to get around the executive director.

The writing process catalyzed the formation of in and out groups among commissioners and researchers, the bias against educational "insiders" in both camps deciding which commissioners and researchers had the most influence in the process. The writing process shut out several researchers from any further role within RCOL, prompting several researchers to heed the unfriendly signals sent their way, and to exercise the exit option. The in and out status among the researchers was reinforced by commissioner preferences and bias. Reiterating a theme discussed in Chapter 3, a researcher (Interview, 1995) maintained that MET-seconded researchers were blocked from the inner group:

A researcher's influence depended upon a match-up between a commissioner's and a researcher's ideology, and researcher personality and competence. The Commissioners had favourite researchers: unless you had a solid and direct relationship with a commissioner you wouldn't get on the screen. MET researchers were blocked before the writing process, and their "out" status confirmed in spades by the executive director. I just wouldn't play the game after a while... The potential for all of us was not reached. There was an unnecessary level of frustration and anxiety: a more up-front delineation of roles and tasks and values would have helped clarify this issue.

Researcher G (Interview, 1995) outlined some of the connections a few researchers had with commissioners, connections that played a role in ensuring direct researcher access to a commissioner. On the other hand, MET staffers were denied easy access:
Two researchers were chosen by the co-chairs, and this caused some resentment among the other commissioners because they hadn't been involved in this decision, but it didn't threaten [these two researchers'] credibility. Another researcher was a disciple of Caplan, and was connected to the Stephen Lewis task force; the black-focus baggage came from there, there was no secret about it. The co-chairs were annoyed that they were given people from the Ministry without their say. They said their power and prerogative weren't respected and were resentful of [the MET secondments] no matter how good they were.

The writing process also led to some blurring and conflict of roles as commissioners and researchers became advocates, critics, writers, and editors, with E-mail drafts bouncing their way between commissioners' homes and RCOL headquarters. In this process, the more influential researchers would sometimes challenge commissioner preferences and triumph in the process, as they fought for the integrity of "their" chapters.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: IMPROVISATION, BIAS, AND HIERARCHY

Researcher A (Interview, 1995) portrayed RCOL's culture as chaotic and bruising, but one that imparted some personal satisfaction, as individual interaction compensated for collective deficiencies:

There was an absence of a corporate culture, with no clear way of getting anything done. Time lines were not respected, jobs not divided properly, and procedures not followed. There was chaos but this was balanced by some people with integrity. Some good things emerged despite the organization. It was confounding, with no clear sense of where we were going, but filled at the same time with excitement. I felt privileged about the undertaking, but I felt also anger and frustration about being underutilized and distracted by the trivial. You can be a virtuoso player but still need a conductor. I was relieved to get out of there. I never got a heartfelt thanks from the top but I enjoyed the horizontal links.

In a similar perspective, Researcher B (Interview, 1995) described a "volatile, changing culture in which nobody, even the commissioners, felt secure: you were in one month, and out the next". Relationships between the commissioners were "fractious": with Caplan at odds with Bégin, Caplan fighting with Murphy over funding for religious schools, and Glaze close to tears on a number of occasions, because of the way Caplan and Bégin interacted with her. Commissioners were "suspicious of one another", all of them with "strong personalities with strong interests", engaged in a "clash of egos". At the end of the process, with Caplan away much of the time, this researcher contended that fellow researchers "got the opportunity" to see that their preferences found their way into the Report.
Researcher E (Interview, 1995), in a like-minded description, thought that RCOL's culture was fractured and individualistic, with a lack of respect for some individuals:

In any formal attempt to have a self-directed work group, you'd expect respect for individual learning and expertise, but there wasn't, it was very individualistic and fractured. Most researchers felt unsupported and frustrated, this sense cycled through everyone. There were times when you felt good, but not that often. Short shrift was given to recognizing different strengths.

Researcher F (Interview, 1995) thought that the creation of a cohesive culture was impeded by RCOL's short project-like duration, and perhaps by commissioner absence:

We didn't have a shared culture: people had different ideas, and in a short time we had to create everything. It's not like starting up a school where people share a common vision. Maybe if the commissioners had been there more [at 101 Bloor Street West], we may have developed a shared culture on some nominal things like consensus and working together. There were times when people were happy, and I personally didn't experience a huge amount of conflict.

Caplan (Interview, 1995) said that RCOL had several cultures, and that Di Cecco effectively "ran most of" the organization, especially in the last months. He conceded that conflict at times was a problem "but we were saved some of the terrible explosions that plague other such organizations". The frequent absences of commissioners may have retarded the growth of a cohesive culture, he noted, but if he had been at 101 Bloor more often, "this might have caused more friction with Bégin" [who had taken up residence in Toronto and was more often there].

Despite the lack of an internally cohesive culture, the experience of working together at a crisis pace towards a single overriding goal (the Report) did forge a culture of sorts, one that divided "outsiders" to RCOL (consultants and outside scholars) and "insiders", and that made the work inputs of the former difficult to assimilate. The observation notes reveal that, once the writing process was launched, the intensity of the work, the in-house feel for style and preferences, and the close working relationship of commissioners and researchers, hurly-burly though it was, all erected a formidable barrier to "outsider" interventions, save the comments of the four readers. For better or worse, the writing process forged a culture within RCOL that established a dividing line between "us and them". Invariably, the work of the few "outsiders" who contributed drafts on particular issues did not pass muster with RCOLers.
For example, after initial in-house efforts failed to produce suitable drafts on accountability and community alliances, the chapters were parcelled to outside writers. Their work in return received little praise from the commissioners: "too dry, too ivory-tower sounding" and so forth. Researchers, and sometimes commissioners, would then be assigned the task of re-writing the drafts in a more acceptable "house" style. The strong role initially envisaged for the outside editor was steadily emasculated by commissioner and researcher alike. By the late fall of 1994, in-house researcher editorial work had largely replaced the intervention of an outside editor who was considered by some researchers as too heavy-handed in her rewriting of text, to the point of changing or obscuring its meaning. The observation notes illustrate some of the problems organizational "outsiders" faced when they became involved in the RCOL process:

Notes: August 10, 1994 - Discussion of the outside editor's draft of part I. Di Cecco to researchers (before the commissioners' meeting): It's not a disaster. She toned down some of Caplan's comments. The commissioners enter the conference room and discuss part I. Begin: It's boring. We need a snappy introduction. There's too many "WASP stats" (i.e., where are the figures for the francophones?). Bharti: It doesn't take the reader along. Murphy: The contribution of Egerton Ryerson to Ontario education is slighted, referring to excerpts from Rebecca Coulter's commissioned paper (1995), quoted at length in an earlier draft, which says in effect that Ryerson was interested in taming the unruly lower classes for the benefit of the elite. The offending passages will be edited out.

October 13 - Big flap: The outside editor is not happy with my zealous re-editing of chapters 1-6 in an attempt to reduce the out-of-control size, redundancies, and editorializing that some RCOLers thought inappropriate for introductory chapters. She claims I've removed the "voice" of the commissioners. I've been nicknamed "George the Slasher" by Caplan.

November 15 - A researcher is in a huff because the outside editor doesn't like the implementation chapter and wants to rewrite it. The researcher says no to any rewriting and the outside editor replies that she doesn't want her name on the report if we don't accept her advice. Her name will not appear on the report.

RCOL's culture was a jerry-built amalgam of work cultures that members brought to the organization and that were adapted or jettisoned as the process ensued, and overlayed with two features that defined its own organizational culture: improvisation and a hierarchy spawned by bias. Events and tasks moved quickly within RCOL, and RCOL was too short-lived to allow any growth of coherent work-based values, attitudes, and behaviours among its members that could be described
as a stable organizational culture with which to socialize its members over sustained periods of time. Throughout the process, people came and went as the task demanded or as they were shoved aside; commissioners were at 101 Bloor Street West one day and gone a day or two later, leaving the researchers to prepare for their next whirlwind visit. A core group of researchers, the executive director, and support staff would provide some on-site continuity during the twenty-one and a half months of RCOL’s operation, and their numbers dwindled to a handful in the waning days of the mandate. Instead of a stable culture based on organizational tradition and time-honoured ways of doing things, a culture of improvisation took root, as members took on a succession of tasks that were for the most part unique and not to be repeated. But this feature of adhocery was not the only defining characteristic of this culture.

Because adhocacies are associated with a lack of bureaucratic prescription and with a free-flowing give-and-take in the tasks and how they are done, an assumption in the literature is that such organizations are defined less by the norms of bureaucracy than those of democracy.

Many people, especially creative ones, dislike both structural rigidity and concentration of power. That leaves them only one structural configuration. Adhocracy is the one that is both organic and decentralized -- so they find it a great place to work. In essence, Adhocracy is the only structure for those who believe in more democracy with less bureaucracy. (Mintzberg, 1979, p.460)

In RCOL's case, the organization was decidedly democratic for some members, and considerably less so for others. For members who were at the wrong end of the stick defined by bias and hierarchy, RCOL was more like a prison from which they could not wait to escape. Bias and hierarchy combined to add structure to a culture that RCOL could call its own.

Glaze (Interview, 1995) pulled no punches in describing her perception of in and out groups within RCOL:

RCOL was dysfunctional with a very negative culture and characteristics, with blatant favouritism and a lack of respect for some individuals compared to others. These kind of things make an organization implode after a time. It was not a flat-line organization, it was absolutely a hierarchy, with in and out groups. Not all people felt equally valued and some left RCOL totally demoralized as human beings; this had never happened to them before in their careers. Others hung in and counted the days for [RCOL] to end. Researchers from the Ministry were treated with suspicion, and anti-educator sentiment was common throughout the Commission. All the educators within RCOL were treated
poorly and one by one they were destroyed. We should have had someone to mediate but instead those that could have performed this role only fanned the flames and also became part of the in group/out group scenario.

Researcher C (Interview, 1995) said that there was a "hidden hierarchy" among the commissioners, and a more explicit one among the researchers. The co-chairs, according to this researcher:

didn't walk the talk in terms of all five commissioners being equal. The co-chairs pushed things, and they were like two ministers sharing one ministry, with another three ministers without portfolio becoming junior ministers and who wanted to be full ministers. There was also a hierarchy among researchers: the idea of a three-person senior research team evolved, and Bégin invented the term. If you want to see the hierarchy among the researchers, just look at the order of researcher names inside the cover of the Report.

While some RCOLers described the organization as "flat-line," i.e., non-hierarchical, and democratic, the relationship of its members was defined by a formidable hierarchy of ins and outs. This informal but nevertheless real arrangement established and maintained differentiated patterns of influence within the organization. Bias, as described earlier at length, defined relationships for both commissioners and researchers and had a profound impact on whose ideas mattered most, and in deciding the level of respect accorded to individuals. Insider/outsider bias was an artifact of RCOL's public status and the overriding determination to produce a Report that would not reflect stakeholder stalemate. Bias was built into the composition of the Commission by Minister Cooke; its particular internal applications were conceived and nurtured by the co-chairs, operationalized through on-going micropolitics, and enforced by the executive director. Not surprisingly, the degree of internal conflictiveness, and the degree of access to the commissioners as described by researchers, varied according to the in/out dichotomy: senior researchers perceived less conflict and greater access, while "junior" researchers spoke of little except conflict, power games, and diminished access. Thus, bias within RCOL had a cognitive dimension (preordaining the acceptability of ideas based on member association), a micropolitical dimension (distributing power and influence unevenly among its members), and an organizational dimension (constructing rule-bound behaviour). All three dimensions reinforced an overlay of hierarchy upon a largely adhocratic organization, defining a culture that provided much freedom for some of its members and considerable constraints for others.
ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

I include in this section on organizational structure some ideas from Leithwood, Steinbach, and Ryan (1997, in press, p. 23) on organizational learning and team learning processes, a conceptualization they substantially adapted from Neck and Manz (1994):

Team learning is directly influenced by a set of conditions inherent in the social interactions of the group (e.g. encouragement of divergent views). These conditions are themselves shaped directly by leadership (e.g. expertise in managing group processes) and team culture (e.g. shared values), and indirectly by conditions provided by the larger organization (e.g. its structure) and the wider environment in which it is located.

From the vantage point of Leithwood et al., RCOL was not an exercise in team learning. While divergent views did emerge throughout the process and were accommodated when possible through mutual adjustment and equivocality, the rift of insider/outsider bias ultimately meant that ideas, and who presented them, were preordained in terms of their acceptability. Hence a free-flowing exchange of ideas was constrained by the bedrock of political interests at stake and the internal contestation of public values. No idea was considered value-neutral within the Commission, unattached from individuals who brought it forward. Within such a highly-politicized public instrument commissioners perceived themselves primarily as defenders and promoters of certain ideas and of particular interests, and secondarily as idea "entrepreneurs" and conceptually-oriented thinkers. Instead of a team geared to promote organizational learning, RCOL was a composite of representatives of inside and outside voices for whom articulating particularist visions and defending turf were explicitly part of the political bargain. Politics fractured RCOL, inhibiting the coalescence of a team.

Furthermore, the promotion of divergence of thinking as described by Leithwood et al. (1997) would seem to rest heavily on the assumption that the knowledge base of team players is of the expert variety, and that the collective efforts of the team should be to move its members beyond status-quo oriented "'exploitation' of well-established solutions as opposed to 'exploration' strategies involving wider searches for solutions, greater risk taking and more innovation" (Leithwood et al., 1997, p.15). To be sure, RCOLers were bent on "exploration" and the search for new and novel approaches, but much of their internal learning energies were devoted to building up the knowledge base of outsider, non-expert co-chairs in a constructivist sense, a process that was in turn constrained by large gaps in the external knowledge base, in a functionalist sense. Within RCOL, the knowledge base was itself a
constraint to the promotion of divergent thinking. Given the nature of a daunting time-frame that put an abrupt closure to the building of a collective knowledge base, the best product that RCOLers could offer was a work-in-progress that could only be refined and modified through additional cogitation and social interaction, through public debate, academic scrutiny, policy formulation, and the implementation process, all of which were beyond RCOL's control.

Leithwood et al. (1997, p. 23) also note that leadership in managing group processes is a key factor in promoting the formation of a "collective mind and collective learning". While the findings of this section would strongly support this assertion, the lack of success of RCOL in this direction is largely attributable to (micro)political and personality factors internal to the Commission that inhibited such leadership whether from the co-chairs, commissioners as a whole, or from the two executive directors. Micropolitics, as I observed above, may also promote organizational action. Significantly, Leithwood et al. (1997) do not include a discussion of micropolitics as either an impediment or a catalyst to leadership and team learning.

Team culture, another important factor to promote collective learning, was notable by its absence within RCOL, as noted above. The culture within RCOL was fractured by insider and outsider bias among commissioners and researchers, creating a hierarchy of in's and out's. But attaining a cohesive culture would seem from the literature on commissions to be problematic if not unattainable, when commissioners drift in and out of the process, when researchers work often in isolation, cut off from other major streams of commission activity, and when executive directors must keep two divergent internal groups contented and goal-oriented in the context of divergent centrifugal forces at work that pull organizational members apart. Ultimately, the development of divergent views and of collective thinking was constrained within RCOL by the "larger organization" (Leithwood et al., 1997, p. 23) that drew up the mandate, appointed the commissioners, set and controlled the budget, and defined the time-lines: the NDP government and the Ministry of Education and Training.

GETTING THE JOB DONE

Researcher A (Interview, 1995) said that RCOL could be described as a "no organization" model, and that "some chaos in a royal commission [should be anticipated] but a lot of ours was avoidable, and we had too many false starts". This researcher added that what made this topsy-turvy
process bearable "was talking and working with fellow researchers; it was the best professional development experience I ever had. The human element was the saving grace". Also seeing a silver lining in grey turbulent clouds, Researcher B (Interview, 1995) said that despite the organizational problems, inter-personal conflict, and a work climate that enveloped its members like "cabin fever", RCOL produced a reasonable report nearly on time "because of the commitment of all to see it through...There was an undercurrent of creativity and talented people with big egos, and the friction created was maybe necessary to unlock the creativity and to get the job done". Researcher F (Interview, 1995) was equally descriptive about the process, the commissioners and the product: "The commissioners were like a group of adolescents, enthusiastic, impetuous, with varying degrees of intelligence; it was like herding cats. It's astonishing it worked at all. It's hard to think of a proper metaphor to explain a chaotic process and a good product".

Despite role ambiguity and conflict, the politics of ins and outs, commissioner conflict, and rampant prima donnaism, RCOL did not suffer the fate of other commissions like that on Reproductive Technologies and the Erasmus Commission, where internal conflict led to widely publicized turmoil, firings, and delays in reporting (Caplan, Interview, 1995; Cooke, Interview, 1996). RCOL was able to surmount these problems because of its members' collective and individual will to finish the Report on time, as commissioners and a dwindling number of researchers joined in common cause, less as an organization, and more as individuals determined to see the task through. The Report was consequently the product of individual integrity, grit, and improvisation, created in an organizational structure that paradoxically constrained and catalyzed individual initiative.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In Chapter 7, I have examined and analyzed the findings on the construction of RCOL as an organizational structure, paying particular heed to adhocracy, roles, leadership, culture, and organizational learning. In Chapter 8, I summarize the major conclusions of this study, and discuss some implications for research and practice that arise from this it.
CHAPTER 9 - CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter serves several purposes. In the first section I summarize the main findings of this dissertation. In the second section, I analyze some of these findings from a perspective of constructivism and assess the usefulness of this concept in analyzing the three perspectives of knowledge, purpose, and organization developed in this study. Thirdly, I reconceptualize some major findings from the perspective of Greenfield (1993), one that bears comparison with constructivism. I follow up this discussion with a note on methodological implications. In the fourth section, I examine a number of implications for practice, research, and theory that these conclusions suggest to me as worthy of future consideration. Finally, I impose closure on this discussion with a few remarks about the terrain I have travelled in this dissertation.

SUMMARY: KNOWLEDGE CONSTRUCTION - CONTEXTS AND PROCESSES

During the 1990s two contextual issues, economic and social, emerged in the United States and in Canada that influenced the way that schools are perceived as public instruments. One side of the economic debate posits a causal linkage between education failure and economic decline, that schools neglect to provide adequate social capital for the wider needs of society, while the other side portrays the inadequate social capital argument as scapegoating schools. The social perspective suggests that the deterioration of the social fabric is undermining schools, and that changes in the racial and ethnic composition of society are making new demands on schools that are only partially addressed, if at all, by a diverse group of policy makers (Ginsburg & Plank, 1995; Paquette, 1995, 1996; Manzer, 1994, 1996; Martell, 1996).

Within RCOL, commissioners were generally unsympathetic to the central assumption underpinning what is termed a "technological liberal" perspective that suggests an intimate connection between the condition of the economy and the condition of public schooling (Cf. Manzer, 1996). The purposes of education section in the Report, and its general argumentation would instead reflect a scepticism about this assumption, and as the primal driver of education reform is described as the overall context of change along several dimensions. RCOLers were less economy-centric and more school-
centric, and the Report was remarkably free from the scapegoating of any societal institutions. RCOL's argumentation may be seen as an accommodation of several educational ideologies within the structures and processes of public education: technological liberal (on assessment, some curriculum issues, and the distribution of authority); communitarian (Roman Catholic, francophone, aboriginal, and ethno-minority, and funding issues); and ethical-liberal (the attention to equity issues, the school as leveller, the continuance of the equity educational agenda of the Rae government/Cooke Ministry).

The contexts that RCOL faced, compared with those of the generation-earlier Hall-Dennis Committee, were markedly different, especially in demographic, economic, technological, funding, political, and moral authority aspects. In the days of Hall-Dennis, a boundless optimism about the future, a growing impatience with the status quo in myriad manifestations, and a deep provincial treasure chest, all combined to provide a variety of contexts that favoured large-scale, radical, and costly reform. In RCOL's case, the future was widely perceived in a somewhat less benign fashion, the trend to educational reform was counterbalanced by entrenched interests for whom the status quo was just fine, and "no new money" for public spending was growing in popularity as a truism to describe a constraining wall of public debt and deficit. The fiscal/economic environment and the costs attached to recommendations (Simeon, 1987) are often portrayed as constraining commission recommendations. Nevertheless, commissioners, while acknowledging that the current fiscal budget was constraining, chose not to let fiscal constraints be an insurmountable obstacle to their thinking.

From the context of educational politics and policy-making, the decade prior to RCOL's establishment witnessed several changes of provincial government led by different political parties, and even more changes of minister of education. Coupled with extensive reorganization within MET, this led to a perception in the hearings of a rudderless direction and lack of leadership within public education. Despite this perception, a number of RCOL's recommendations were built on the assumptions that MET should play a leading role in curriculum, assessment, and funding, and several functions were recentralized. This period was also punctuated by much start-and-stop effort at educational reform; educators were wary and weary of reform efforts and embittered by the imposition of the Social Contract, while teacher federations posed a large obstacle to any reform efforts that did not suit their agendas, despite palpable public and media dissatisfaction with the state of public education. This climate impacted directly on the choice of Minister Cooke to stack the commissioners with "outsiders," sending a strong

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signal to stakeholders that educational reform, not stalemate, was his expectation for RCOL's orientation.

The genesis of the Commission started during the Solipo Ministry, and may have been for Cooke an unwelcome spillover from a minister who was less sure in his portfolio; waiting for the Report, he contended, did act as a brake to his agenda for reform. Cooke maintained he welcomed RCOL as a high-profile consultative mechanism that would help create a climate of opinion favourable to his own agenda for systematic reform, and as a synthesizer of a number of reform efforts and stalled policy initiatives. Cooke and his deputy minister Pascal played a key role in shaping the terms of reference for RCOL, and both took part in six stakeholder forums that identified salient issues worthy of RCOL's purview. In meetings with the commissioners, Cooke identified his priorities as the reduction of the number of school boards, the creation of an independent testing agency, the initiation of early literacy intervention, and the establishment of parental councils at the provincial and local levels.

Cooke contended that the co-chairs were "ferocious" in their demands that the arm's-length relationship between the Ministry and RCOL be respected, and he commented that the commissioners did not reveal much of their policy advice intentions to him until the release date. For their part, the co-chairs felt that this arm's-length had been compromised by Cooke in several ways: the control exerted over RCOL's budget exerted by MET through the MET-appointed executive director; the imposition of MET-seconded researchers; and the presumption, made public by Cooke, that RCOL was studying ways of implementing his amalgamation agenda. A major constraint of commissions is related to the budget of the commission itself, its capacity to engage in research, and its opportunity to promote its activities (Smith & Patterson, 1994). In RCOL's case, the lack of co-chair control over the budget, and a small budget for research (that was reduced even further to subsidize youth outreach funding) were perceived as significant constraints by the co-chairs. From an institutional point of view, the Ministry had exerted an ideological stranglehold on RCOL's predecessor, the Hall-Dennis Committee (1965-1968) (Gidney, 1996; Ricker, 1981), but other than a sharing of a progressive bias (Cooke and the commissioners), MET played no direct role in controlling the outcomes of RCOL deliberations, as MET-seconded researchers were not influential inside RCOL because of co-chair bias, and expert input into the RCOL process came from well beyond the confines of MET. Moreover, after a decade of hit-and-miss policy initiatives and internal reorganization and decredentialization within the Ministry, and two decades of decentralizing key functions to board levels, MET was no longer the primary moving force and what was once described
as a highly-integrated, if not in-bred, policy community.

A legal constraint to the scope of inquiry is the need to "operate within the constitutional authority of the level of government which created it" (MacKay, 1990, p.35). Although most educational issues fell well within provincial jurisdiction, some issues were connected to constitutionally-entrenched rights. RCOLers interpreted this constraint in two ways. At one level, the Minister appointed commissioners who represented two constitutionally-protected interests at stake, Roman Catholic and francophone, and the mandate specifically instructed commissioners to respect the rights of these groups. Internally, RCOLers were predisposed to accommodating the preferences of these two groups without much debate because of their constitutionally-entrenched positions. At another level, particularly as Roman Catholic interests were concerned, section 93 of the Canada's Constitution Act, 1867, various Supreme Court decisions in the wake of the full-funding decision, and various provincial decisions thereafter, all acted to curb the dominant view within the Commission that the interests of the public education system would better be served by one, secularized entity.

Commissions typically have broad mandates that are on occasion embellished or liberally interpreted by commissioners, and with budgets and time-lines that vary in degree of flexibility. The interpretation of the mandate is squarely on the shoulders of the commissioners, and this interpretation may push the direction of a task force or commission in a direction that the government could not have foreseen or wanted (Cameron, 1993). The mandate that RCOL was given by the Rae Government was broad, encompassing program, vision, accountability, and system organization. The co-chairs considered their mandate as a stepping stone, and the Report would go well beyond the mandate, offering a vision of four engines and addressing an issue that was identified as beyond the purview, funding.

The subject matter of the mandate was an "ill-defined" domain in ways comparable to other policy-oriented commissions (Cairns, 1990; Cameron, 1993; Simeon, 1987). Publicly-funded education in Ontario is an ill-defined domain for a number of reasons. At the level of problem identification and solution-finding, stakeholders had fundamental disagreements about what the problems were and where solutions lay. Both the teaching and learning process and the amelioration of non-educative, school-based problems that detract from learning are marked by unclear technologies that offer no high degree of assurance that the solution or policy recommendation will actually have its intended effect. Because opinions, facts, and values are intertwined within public education, they required a great deal of
interpretation within RCOL, and wrestling with ambiguity was a prime occupation of RCOLers; the lack of hard data, or reliable information, about a host of issues created a great deal of uncertainty (Feldman, 1989) within RCOL. The need for interpretation meant that RCOLers were engaged less in discrete problem-solving and more in a normative process, with development of an extended and interconnected argument. Not able to offer demonstrable proofs of cause and effect, the RCOLers had to argue, using logic, evidence, and persuasion (Cf. Majone, 1989). Although large measures of ambiguity and uncertainty contributed to the ill-definedness of the subject matter, not all components were uniformly blanketed: high degrees of certainty described the policy goals and demands of stakeholders from Roman Catholic and francophone communities, and the accommodation of these preferences was facilitated within RCOL by the personal advocacy of a co-chair and a commissioner.

The composition question is an important one for commissions, for as relatively small policy advice bodies with superbureaucratic authority, who is appointed to them and who is hired to serve them are often major indicators of how issues will be perceived and prioritized, and of the "spin", ideological and otherwise, that will be applied to ideas in the form of argumentation and recommendations (Aucoin, 1971; Simpson, 1997). The "outsiderness" of the co-chairs in particular meant that the general direction of the Commission was not an exercise in expert problem-solving and that the learning needs of the co-chairs would play a large role in the specifics of internal deliberations and the writing processes. Outsiderness also played another major role within RCOL as a shaper of bias. While a general bias for progressive politics was shared by the commissioners with the Minister in a loosely-connected fashion to provided some unity of thought, a bias for outsiders divided the thoughts, actions, and loyalties within commissioner and researcher ranks. In the Commission, this meant that the only commissioner/educator was portrayed by the co-chairs as an agent of the status quo, and that MET-seconded staffers were viewed in a similar fashion, and as imposed liabilities. In the hearings process, from September through December 1993, the bias for outsiders played out in commissioner receptivity for parents, students, and "outside" stakeholders, and in a jaundiced view (except for Glaze) of organized "inside" stakeholders. Within RCOL, a bias for outsiders was manifested in micropolitical and cognitive patterns, and as a core unwritten rule that defined whose ideas mattered most. Commissioners acknowledged that they had distinct sympathies towards certain stakeholders, to the extent of being their champions and advocates within the Commission, a claim of solidarity most readily transparent in Roman Catholic and francophone
representation. The composition of the research team also raised issues related to what ideas, values, and preferences were put forward, and kept on the agenda, depending on their stances as advocates, critics, analysts, and micropoliticians. The influence of certain researchers shot upwards as they assumed the defaulted role of writers and as their numbers dwindled in the face of many still uncompleted tasks.

The orientation period lasted from May until September 1993, and for the commissioners was less important for knowledge-generation than for rule-making about consensual decision-making and about decisions as to who would be on the research team. A commitment to consensual decision-making and to a majority-only report provided a decision-making-by-committee structure for the deliberation of future internal proceedings, but this same approach undermined the executive capacity and leadership roles of the co-chairs, and generated much micropolitical activity. The first bones of contention among commissioners were the choice of researchers: commissioners felt affronted when the co-chairs chose two researchers without their consent and researchers were brought on board to specifically address Roman Catholic and francophone interests over the objections of Caplan, and the latter facilitated the inclusion of a researcher from the Black community. These researcher decisions identified certain researchers as having a special access to the commissioners who chose them.

Some commissions are noteworthy for their use of public hearings (Salter & Slaco, 1981; Torgerson, 1986). RCOL’s three-month hearings process (September to mid-December 1993) and youth outreach (dozens of events in 1993 and 1994) were designed to encourage presentations from inside and outside stakeholders, from the advantaged and articulate, and from the disadvantaged and less eloquent. The hearings were an important learning tool, in equal parts cognitive and affective and they served to tune commissioners into the particular features of the zeitgeist.

A swirl of conflicting and reinforcing values and ideas, the hearings indoctrinated the commissioners about lived and intellectual ideologies, about paradoxes and dilemmas (Billig et al, 1988), about transmission-and student-centred approaches to teaching, and learning, and about the big issues and the ABC’s of publicly-funded education. The hearings were a key implement for influencing public and media opinion, supported by a vigorous communications strategy, improving the credibility of RCOL and the prospects for educational reform. The hearings also raised as many questions as they answered, giving direction to lines of inquiry throughout 1994.

School visits had more than a symbolic or public relations function (Cf. Deal, 1995) for the
commissioners; for most of them, elementary and secondary schools were unknown quantities in their professional backgrounds. These visits contributed to the commissioners' sense of what schools are all about, catalyzing thinking about the purposes of schooling and teacher overload, about information technology, and about the degree of inclusion of students in the school community.

For RCOL, the media provided a vital linkage to stakeholders and the general public, and were a critical element in influencing public opinion as to the credibility of RCOL and the complexity of the issues, and relaying the Commission's message of the "doability" of education reform. The media also served as an important source of a diverse range of information about ongoing policy initiatives in Ontario and nationally, and about board- and school-level activities. Media coverage also offered a major touchstone for RCOLers' perceptions about their collective sense of efficacy at various points in the process.

After the period of public consultation from September 1993 through December 1993, the next tasks were to process the disorderly mountain of information, ideas, and values that were the product of this process, to structure it and give it some coherent meaning, and to decide what should be said in the Report, how it should be said, and who should say it. These tasks were RCOL's agenda from January to December 1994. Internal deliberations described three types of RCOL meetings that served as main liaison devices: expert, researcher, and commissioner. In commissioner meetings, commissioners and researchers went from an uneasy discussion of administrivia, generalities, and abstractions in the first quarter of 1994 to the more concrete task of reacting to researcher-written chapter drafts, until well into the early winter of that year.

The integration of knowledge in commissions is often problematic, as public hearings and research may be separate streams of activity that produce different products and concerns (Cairns, 1990; Simeon, 1987). Within RCOL, these two streams were more closely linked, as commissioners and researchers participated in both streams, and research-as-synthesis and internal deliberations followed directly upon the completion of public hearings. Within commissioner and researcher streams at RCOL, points of friction revolved around diverging conceptions about how to accomplish the mandate, about what should be in the Report, and who should write it. Some researchers played critical roles in this process because they assumed major responsibility for the conceptualization and writing of large chunks of the Report, while most MET-seconded researchers were edged out from making any substantial contribution in the
writing process.

April 1994 was the most critical month in RCOL's short history, with three factors combining to ignite organizational action: a researcher-led confrontation with the co-chairs pushed the writing agenda forward; Caplan experienced his "Pauline epiphany" and proclaimed his readiness to commit himself to discussing what should be in the Report, after more than a year of listening, talking, reading, and cogitating; and the concept of engines was partially developed, to spark commissioners with an enthusiasm for ideas, and to provide a conceptual framework of sorts by which RCOLers could order their thoughts.

Some commissions possess a large research staff that pursues original research in several disciplines, while others employ a smaller staff whose primary task is to synthesize existent research from a variety of sources (Cameron, 1993; Simeon, 1987). RCOL followed the latter tack, synthesizing information from a variety of sources: past and current policy documents, scholarly and popular literature, media analysis, commissioned papers, the inputs of outside readers, experts, and informal networks, the substance of hearings, and positions staked out in internal deliberations.

Messy, iterative, political, acrimonious, and often arbitrary, RCOL internal deliberations were driven by divergent thinking of commissioners and researchers because of their varied backgrounds and because of the desire to innovate, to write a radical and fresh vision of publicly-funded education. The sketching of an ordered set of goals or the definition of a vision were notable by their absence in guiding the writing process, but values and ideas were eventually structured by the writing process itself, in an inductive fashion. The outsider status of most of the commissioners meant that they were, by definition, non-experts, and this contributed both to a lengthy learning curve and a lack of direction to internal deliberations. These discussions were highly iterative and protracted, as topics would be returned to again and again when commissioners scheduled their work days at 101 Bloor Street West. Divergent thinking, commissioner learning needs and styles, iteration, and inductive logic all contributed to the "big picture" emerging at the end of the process, not unlike some other commissions (Cf. Cameron, 1993; Cairns, 1990).

Within RCOL, insider/outsider bias played a large role in defining whose knowledge was influential and whose was not, for commissioners and researchers, and as applied to stakeholder presentations. The research team's structure meant that certain communities (Roman Catholic and
francophone) had a privileged position in advocacy; the relative isolation of Glaze meant that the perspectives of inside public stakeholders were disprivileged. The general knowledge orientation within RCOL was towards "soft" knowledge (Cf. Simeon, 1987), reflective of researchers’ backgrounds in the social sciences, the humanities, and pedagogy, without an in-house capacity for "hard" knowledge of the number-crunching or statistical variety.

Within RCOL, problem identification and the generation of solutions varied according to the issue at hand. The hearings were critical in alerting commissioners to a number of major problems that emerged as major themes in the Report, particularly teacher overload and the "40 percent factor." In hearings, Catholic and francophone issues were reiterated to the point of saturation, and within the Commission these communities had two strong commissioner advocates. While school violence was addressed often in the hearings, the commissioners decided not to discuss it in the Report. Gender issues were on a few occasions identified in the hearings, but did not receive a direct response from RCOL. Some issues came from other policy areas, such as the recommendation for the "engine" of ECE that was carried forth from the Premier's Council by Bégin. The other engines reflected a variety of sources and commissioner champions: community education was brokered by Murphy and was inspired by a faith-based notion of the role of the community in education; information technology was championed by Caplan and was twiggied by school visits; and teacher education and professional development were put on the front burner by Caplan and Bégin, because of what they heard in hearings, school visits, reading, and the advocacy of a researcher. Some ideas, like the engines, were considered "sexy" by the commissioners and consistently kept on the short list of priorities. On the other hand, except for Glaze, commissioners did not have an abiding passion for accountability and governance issues, and the researchers tasked with those portfolios had great difficulty in focussing commissioners to confront those issues. Commissioners and researchers performed these roles more as advocates and critics, and less as "impartial" analysts (Hambrick, 1974). Time was a major constraint to issue identification. Once the writing process started, the time available for substantial discussion of larger issues rapidly dwindled, and the scope of purview of commissioners and researchers was narrowed successively to chapters, sections, paragraphs, and sentences.

For an idea to make it to the recommendation stage, a combination of individual commissioner and researcher support was critical, though not all had equal influence in these matters, with
insider/outside bias playing a key role. The burgeoning size of the Report, however, allowed for a great degree of inclusion of commissioner and researcher preferences, as long as no commissioner strongly opposed the notion, in a politicized process of horse-trading. The Report grew in length accordingly, the product of inclusion, political negotiation and compromise, not vision-inspired symmetry.

A written report is a major product, if not the major product, in the life cycle of a commission (Cameron, 1993) and within RCOL getting the Report ready for the release date was the overriding goal of the process. RCOL's writing process followed a non-linear process, as it developed out of micropolitical confrontation and cognitive epiphany, and once kickstarted in this manner subsumed the elements of internal deliberations. While non-linear, the writing process provided a structure and purpose to RCOL's organizational action that was hitherto lacking. By reducing the complex reality of public education to arguments based on evidence, logic, persuasion and norm-setting (Cf. Majone, 1989), the writing process also contributed to the inculcation of organizational memory (Cf. Feldman, 1989), something concrete that RCOLers could focus upon. It was in the process of writing that the major themes, principles, and goals emerged and the pieces of research began to fit together, and a process of interpretation coalesced. At the same time, producing the text constrained the discussion of ideas, as what was on the printed page became the dominant frame that organized commissioner and researcher thinking. In RCOL's case, the writing process may appropriately be described as design without order, a process more adhocratic than bureaucratic (Cf. Feldman, 1989).

The words and pictures of the Report were elicited in eight and a half months, from late April 1994 to the frantic last touches applied to final drafts of several chapters in the second week of December. Much of the writing was accomplished by a thinning number of researchers, none of whom had expected to be principal authors. The writing process, at a crisis pace, was characterized in some cases by a high degree of reciprocality, with drafts bouncing back and forth between researchers and commissioners, aided by E-mail networking; in other cases chapter drafts were subject to a minimum of internal cross-pollination. By the early summer of 1994, as their vacations beckoned, commissioners were overloaded with genises of chapters, creating a logjam of written material that commissioners had the greatest difficulty in reaching closure on. By September 1994 much of the Report was still in a rough draft stage, and several chapters were barely developed. The impending deadline finally put a closure to a highly-iterative process that commissioners found great difficulty in reaching agreement upon.
Report logic, continuity, and cohesiveness were particular problems because of a number of related factors: chapters were written without the aid of a general conceptual framework; the time for internal discussion rapidly dwindled; coordination of writing was ad hoc, sporadic, and dependent on individuals' willingness to invite comments; and researcher overload impeded opportunities for collaboration.

Pleasing commissioners with the written products of researchers may be difficult, as research can be dismissed as "too abstract, clinical, dehumanized and removed from the aspirations and sufferings of real people" (Cairns, 1990, p. 100). The work of outside consultants who worked on sections met with this criticism. The writing process also catalyzed the further isolation of MET-seconded researchers whose efforts at writing, not surprisingly given the role of bias, failed to please commissioners. Their unfinished efforts would be completed by the smaller band of researchers whose particular areas of expertise often lay outside of these subject areas, adding to a researcher sense of overburdening that was only relieved when the full Report was printed in early January 1995. The written comments of four outside readers were a critical intervention for those researchers who felt justified in their attempts to prune the size of the drafts and to excise some of the comments therein.

Community education and equity issues proved the most difficult to conceptualize and write about, Catholic and francophone issues the easiest. The four engines, a commissioner-driven concept, were difficult to integrate into the Report as researchers did not understand how they fitted in with their own contributions. Of the commissioners, Caplan was the most prolific writer, and the consistent voice of persuasion, penning the Short Version (with contributions from researchers), and adding to, and editorializing the larger version, mainly by E-mail from his home in Ottawa. Bégin was the main author of the section on francophone issues, and Murphy and a researcher were the principal authors on Catholic issues. Murphy and an outside consultant designed the CD-ROM version. Five researchers wrote and edited the rest of the Report.

**SUMMARY: THE CONSTRUCTION OF CORE VALUES AND EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY**

An important task for RCOLers was the construction of core values and of an educational philosophy for publicly-funded education in Ontario. Core values must be continuously constructed, defined, and debated because their complex and often multiple meanings are interpreted in different ways
by different stakeholders, and as times change, the emphases of various values may decline in public profile while others rise in prominence (Manzer, 1994, 1996; Paquette, 1995; Stone, 1989). But the construction of core values within RCOL was not just an alignment with externally-defined preferences, because RCOLers themselves had their own value preferences that needed to be endogenously defined and debated in an extended and iterative process that prompted internal conflict and the formation of value-related groupings based on specific issues (Cf. Wildavsky, 1987). The internal discussion of values was reflective of the structure of internal deliberations and the writing process, following a public argumentation and equivocality model (Cf. Majone, 1989; Weick, 1977) in which value preferences did not direct the process, but rather emerged from the iterative internal debates around specific issues. The handling of values within RCOL was also more in keeping with Weick's notion (1977) of equivocality, the superimposing of multiple meanings for the same values, less sense-making and more an image of layers of meanings imposed upon another. Equivocality was a natural by-product of political accommodation, reflected when each commissioner invested core ideas with their own definitions and sought to have them included in the Report. Equivocality was also a response to several of the core dilemmas of public education, for which the commissioners favoured balance and adjustment over mutually-exclusive constructs.

The release of the Report and subsequent reaction by assorted stakeholders suggest that core values like excellence, equity, and accountability possess a sloganistic quality that have a universal appeal until they are embodied in specific policy recommendations (Cf. Popkewitz, 1980). Once interpreted by various stakeholders, core values quickly lost their universal appeal and were often perceived as unmitigated threats to specific organizational interests: one bloc's equity is another bloc's discrimination; one bloc's conception of public accountability is another's idea of a centralized power grab. When unpacked, the subjective interpretation of core values emphasized that common definitions of core values exist only in the abstract.

The policy specific advice in the Report does not reflect a symmetrical, whole-cloth construction of public values to reflect any one educational paradigm or educational ideology. Rather, the configuration of values and ideas is a heterogeneous construction in response to accommodating the diverse views and needs of stakeholders and to the equivocal meanings assigned to values by RCOLers. Canadian political culture promotes this heterogeneity, because conflict in values and ideas has historically
been balanced by a culture of compromise (Townsend, 1988). Moreover, a dense and complex argument that stretches over 600 pages, featuring 167 recommendations, resists encapsulation in a reductionist, pure-type fashion.

All the commissioners described themselves as left of centre, from left liberal to socialist, with a strong commitment to equity and social justice issues. Some researchers were generally more oriented to excellence/quality than the commissioners, and more conservative politically. Glaze (Interview, 1995) maintained that all commissioners supported quality, community participation, and better teacher preparation, issues that she saw as linked. Less consensus was found, she added, on efficiency, religious choice, and accountability. Researcher G (Interview, 1995) said that particular values had different emphases and champions within RCOL, with Caplan, Glaze, and Murphy advocating various aspects of the all-encompassing equity agenda, and Bégin, Murphy, and Bharti most vocal in support of quality. This researcher also agreed that efficiency appeared to be least valued by commissioners, and that choice created the greatest conflict. Researcher B (Interview, 1995) surmised that efficiency got short shrift because the commissioners might have thought that, by elevating it to a key value, they would be undermining their commitment to equity.

The first of the value laden-debates I featured was on governance. In short, most of the recommendations in this area were consistent with trends towards greater centralization, clearer accountability structures and measures, and a more panoramic involvement of stakeholders in a decision-making or advisory capacity. These trends were strongly tinged with the aims of a technological liberal agenda (Manzer, 1994). The greatest problem in governance issues was probably what to do about school boards: leave them as they are, amalgamate numbers of them, amend their powers, or abolish them altogether. The subtext of this identified problem was the high degree of uncertainty because of a lack of clear and comparable data. While not agreeing to grand-scale amalgamation, the commissioners staked out positions that would significantly circumscribe the scope of school board discretion. One of these areas was their finding that school board involvement in curriculum development was a costly duplication of effort, and an unnecessary public expense, that produced uneven results, a capacity that smaller, "assessment-poor" boards could afford least of all. The argument that MET was better situated to ensure curriculum consistency and quality was widely accepted by all commissioners; Glaze and others were successful in arguing that board trustees should focus on policy, quality assurance, and financial
stewardship. During the hearings, trustees were subject to much criticism for involving themselves in the operational aspects of schooling; the commissioners thought this was an overstepping of trustees' mandates, and the Report sought to limit trustee roles and, to underscore that point, limits were recommended on maximum trustee compensation.

An idea rooted in the notion of accountability, in professional and public senses, was the proposal for a College of Teachers. The idea for a similar professional governance body had floated around the policy community since Hall-Dennis, and was given new life within RCOL by the knowledgeable advocacy of a researcher. The idea of a College was further buoyed by the genuine commitment of the commissioners that teachers have a professional governance body. The College was also envisaged by commissioners as a lever to influence teacher education in the faculties of education, and to lead professional development across the province, two areas of concern raised in the hearings by presenters. The discussion of local governance in an advisory capacity, in the form of school councils, was complicated and lengthy. Most commissioners supported the concept for different reasons. Murphy was the strongest booster of school councils, desiring to balance the power of administrators and teachers with the needs of parents and the wider community. Bégin and Glaze supported this concept, motivated by their aim to "open up" school decision-making; Bharti embraced the idea because of her interest in seeing schools develop as inclusive communities. Caplan was leery of school councils, fearful that potentially disruptive groups could use them as forums to impose their agendas. School-based management was also on the agenda, with Glaze and Begin as the strongest proponents, Caplan the greatest critic.

The purposes of schooling chapter was not planned in the original outline of the Report but was rather the initiative of a researcher who felt that the conflicting expectations raised in the hearings about the role of schools, and what they should be held accountable for, needed clarification. The debate on this topic within RCOL was two-sided. One side within RCOL thought the primary goal of schools should be excellence/quality: to promote intellectual development, with a number of secondary purposes, such as citizenship and preparation for work/career development and other goals. This position was supported by the researcher writing the piece on purposes, and was a notion emphatically embraced by Bégin and Bharti, with support from Murphy on the academic side. Murphy wanted, however, a much greater role for schools in moral education and development. The other position, advocated by Caplan and Glaze, saw
schools serving a more ambitious purpose related to promoting equity: not only would schools pay heed to traditional academic and socialization goals, but they would also attend to those associated with "pastoral care." Caplan thought that narrowing the focus on intellectual development was in effect "pandering" to demands of the Quality Education reformers, and that the competitive aspects of schooling lauded by such groups was "bad." Glaze also wanted a wider scope of goals to include physical, affective, and transformative domains. The treatment of these issues in the Report reflected both positions, a superimposing of technological and ethical liberal outlooks (Manzer 1994, 1996).

A third value-laden issue distilled from the observation notes was the discussion of secondary school curriculum and organization. This debate centred on conflicting images of how schools should promote excellence/quality and the relationship of equity concerns to the former values. One side, supported by Bégan, Bharti, and Murphy, argued that secondary schools needed a curriculum that recognized that students were bound for different destinations, and that courses should be organized on a program basis to reflect this. This position saw competition as a valid value of education and supported accountability, through centralized assessment, to promote quality control. The second position, backed by Glaze and Caplan, argued that quality should be defined as a high standard of literacy and numeracy for the greatest number of students, and that curriculum organization should maximize student choice, and neither sort nor select students according to destinations. Equity considerations were evoked to justify this second position.

The few discussions on public funding to (non-Catholic) religious schools were extended over a five-month period, from April through August 1994. On the religious choice issue, Murphy had won over the other commissioners with the exception of Caplan to his position over a period of several months, using the logic and argumentation of the draft Report, and coupling his proposal with appeals to other values: respecting community and diversity, and honouring parents' role in the education of their children. Like the black-focus debate, this proposal was scuttled by the vehement opposition of one individual to it, in this case the intervention of the co-chair, Caplan. On Black-focus schools, the vociferous opposition of a communications consultant, just as this recommendation was about to go to the printers, proved sufficient to cause the commissioners, and particularly Caplan who was its main advocate, to amend the recommendation. The threat of adverse media and political flack that such a recommendation might engender, as articulated by the consultant, had its intended effect. However, the
ambiguousness of the reworded recommendation did lead to media accusations that RCOL had indeed opted for Black-focus schools.

The Report was seen by RCOLers as a balanced compromise of values, ideas, and preferences, in which both stakeholders and commissioners alike got at least some of what they wanted, but not everything they would have wished for. *For the Love of Learning* is consequently a document of internal and external political compromise, neither the product of a RCOL-brokered meeting of the minds, nor an academically-consistent treatise in which the constituent parts conform to an all-encompassing vision. The consensus on values that emerged in the final version of the Report included some agreement on excellence/quality (intellectual goals foremost), equity, accountability, and community. In most cases, this consensus is more of an unresolved compromise among commissioners than a statement of collectively agreed-upon goals. Choice and efficiency were important to some commissioners and researchers, but the Report cannot be said to be imbued with their meanings. The Report, in the context of public values, may be seen as a balance between equity and excellence and between the needs of internal stakeholders and the expectations of those traditionally not in the decision-making loop, and the affirmation of a public good. The hearings, and numerous special meetings of the commissioners with immigrant/minority groups and the youth outreach strategy, demonstrated the commissioners' commitment to inclusion and respect for diversity. Implicitly, core values such as security (of internal stakeholders) and liberty (particularly students) figure strongly in the argumentation of the Report.

**SUMMARY: CONSTRUCTING MULTIPLE PURPOSES**

Cooke thought that RCOL's primary purpose, achieved early in its mandate, was in creating a consensus for educational reform, and he conceded that waiting for RCOL's Report throughout 1994 acted as a brake to initiating his own reform agenda. He thought that the most important recommendation was on early childhood education, and although budgetary considerations did not allow for its complete implementation, the shoring up of the junior and senior kindergarten programs by his Ministry was a first step towards a comprehensive policy at the (pre-) primary level of schooling. He was disappointed that the Commission did not share his desire to reduce the number of school boards, and thought that parental councils, rather than community-based councils, were politically more appropriate for the times. Cooke also felt that the timing of the release of the Report just a few months before a provincial election that
the NDP lost was unfortunate, as the momentum to implement major recommendations such as early education initiatives either got dissipated or came undone with the change in government.

Most RCOLers thought that the policy advice function of RCOL was limited, constrained by the Minister's own agenda and the timing of the release of the Report on the heels of a provincial election process. The predominant view within RCOL was that Cooke's New Foundations was less a response to RCOL than an independently-arrived at piece of policy-making that bore the preferences of the Minister. Where RCOL recommendations fitted in with this agenda, they were incorporated, and where they didn't fit, they were ignored. Cooke's own views on this subject were not dissimilar: the Ministry was apprised of certain general directions RCOL was heading in, and had the same access to key stakeholders, and its staffers prepared a number of contingency plans to react to, and to implement, key RCOL recommendations. Murphy had a more optimistic appraisal than most other RCOLers, saying that the Report's impact on the Ministry was substantial even if one confines the analysis to the fate of the four engines, which, with the exception of ECE, were embraced by the Government. He noted that even the recommendation for ECE, though not wholeheartedly embraced, was used by the Cooke Ministry to bolster provincial support for junior and senior kindergarten. Provincial support for junior kindergarten would be partially withdrawn by the Snobelen Ministry in the Progressive Conservative government. More than two years after the release of the Report, Caplan had even harsher criticism about how the work of RCOL had either been ignored by the Snobelen ministry, or used to justify governmental action in ways deemed to violate the spirit of the Report.

Unlike many royal commissions, RCOL made no substantial contribution to policy development through original research. The budgetary and time constraints both conspired to minimize the role of research. The commissioned papers were mainly solicited to inform the internal deliberation process. Some of these papers had a direct impact on these deliberations, such as those by King (1995), Nagy (1995), Paquette (1995), Scane (1995), Biemiller (1995), and Dei (1995), but many did not.

One of the primary purposes carved out by RCOL was the evaluation of past education policies, of governmental policy instruments, and of the present school system. For policy-oriented commissions, evaluation is a central concern that runs through all the phases of the organization. Evaluative judgments on past policy and the present educational system in RCOL's case came from a variety of sources (presenters in hearings, the media, commissioners and researchers, policy-makers and policy documents,
experts, outside readers, and formal and informal networks) and featured a number of criteria (input, process, and output). But the lack of clear information on process and output criteria made much of the evaluation more like educated guess-work than an exercise in authoritative judgement.

A commission of inquiry may transcend a narrow definition of policy analysis and evaluation, to reveal points of consensus, and to mobilize public support for policy change (Christie and Pross, 1990). As a cathartic bully-pulpit, RCOL served a major purpose in providing a two-way forum for: airing grievances; assessing the demands of a complex web of stakeholders, group interests, and individuals; combating cynicism about public education and about RCOL; providing an educative function in promoting understanding of the complexity of public issues; stimulating the self-assessment of public educators; making claims for top-down as well as bottom-up change; and leading the discourse on the future of public education in Ontario. In the wake of the Snobelen Ministry's efficiency agenda, the tenuous consensus for education reform that RCOL had crafted was quickly dissipated, and conflict amongst stakeholders reached unprecedented heights, continuing on into the Johnson Ministry as of this writing.

As a two-edged political instrument, RCOL served the Government by providing credibility for Cooke's reforms and as a re-election platform. RCOL also served political needs of the Commissioners: as an instrument for political mobilization, RCOL served to promote the credibility of the Commission itself in its first, uncertain phase; to argue for the common interest in face of stakeholder stalemate and conflict; to consolidate public and media opinion on the need for education reform; and to mobilize public opinion to pressure the Government to take the Report seriously. As a political instrument, RCOL cast its net widely, using a vigorous communication and outreach strategy to reach beyond the confines of a narrow stakeholdership, and elevating the role of the public hearings beyond fact-finding to serving core educative and political functions in the overall process of the Commission.

SUMMARY: CONSTRUCTING THE ORGANIZATION

The organizational aspect of a commission is inherently problematic, as a commission often has no organizational memory, no future beyond its final deadline, and is staffed for relatively short periods of time by individuals from various work and philosophical backgrounds who drift in and out of the process, and for whom cohesive culture is unlikely to emerge (Cairns, 1990; Cameron, 1993).
Commissions may be temporary and project-driven, but they are organizations nonetheless, with mandates, expectations, roles, tasks, timelines, budgets, and personnel (Cairns, 1990; Cameron, 1993; Simeon, 1987). Unlike in most other organizations, however, commission members must learn to function without core elements that more stable organizations rely upon to accomplish their goals: standard operating procedures, routinization, task specificity, stable staffing, a shared organization culture, bureaucratic memory, and a commitment to organizational survival.

RCOL was subject to a great degree of flux in staffing and tasks. Its full cast of players comprised five commissioners, two executive directors, nine researchers, a handful of support staff, an outreach specialist and a communications consultant. Particular phases required specialists who were contracted, such as recording, sound, and translating personnel during the hearings, and translators, copy editors, and production personnel during the later part of the writing phase. RCOL was drawn to a high degree of adhocracy for a number of reasons. The general environment around RCOL was uncertain, complex, and dynamic, if not hostile, a situation that often favours the genesis of an adhocracy (Mintzberg, 1979, p. 431). To survive in that type of environment forced the commissioners to initiate strategies for political mobilization and for influencing the media, strategies that needed to be adapted to the various life-cycles of the Commission. The subject matter before the Commission, interlaced with contested values and unclear technologies, was generally a murky-defined domain. Within RCOL, most problems, issues, and solutions (with exceptions for constitutional issues) could only be identified and interpreted through a long exhaustive process, the means and outcomes of which were only vaguely discerned by members at the beginning of the process. The commitment of the commissioners to go beyond the mandate and to inject the process with their own creativity and innovation pushed RCOL into an even more ill-defined context. Unwilling to accept simple solutions to complex problems, and not universally versed in domain-specific expertise, the commissioners began the process near the bottom of a steep learning curve, and they pulled their organization with them, in an extended exercise of divergent thinking aimed at innovation, to find novel solutions to old and new problems. The need to innovate, and an ambiguous core technology, are also hallmarks of an adhocracy (Mintzberg, 1979, p. 432). Like the topic of national unity, grappling with educational issues within RCOL was often an exercise in shovelling fog (Cameron, 1993).
Each new task that a commission faces is a major organizational challenge, to be accomplished as a once-only experience, often undertaken in a crisis atmosphere. The diversity of task environments and member backgrounds of some commissions pull the organization in several different directions, making coordination and integration problems a recurrent theme (Cairns, 1990). For RCOL the hearings and other public consultations, the construction of knowledge through internal deliberations and the writing process, were all different tasks that had to be learned by people whose backgrounds and viewpoints were divergent, and each cycle of the process required a realignment of what people did, the development of which was largely left to mutual adjustment collectively in liaison devices such as commissioner and researcher meetings along with thousands of informal interactions by individuals, both hallmarks of adhocacies (Cf. Mintzberg, p. 431). Extensive mutual adjustment was necessary because RCOL had neither job descriptions for tasks and for roles that would go as quickly as they came, nor plans that could adequately predict and standardize the work process.

RCOL's politicization, another hallmark of an adhocracy, was complicated not simply because of the imperatives of expertise and of task-related jostling, but also because, as a public organization, internal political interests and values were at stake, and because political bias animated member interaction. The combination of confrontation and epiphany as catalysts for organizational action conform to the notion of a "galvanizing event" that played a similar role in some other commissions (Cameron, 1993; Simeon, 1987). The notion of a galvanizing event, and diminishing time, as signal experiences in several commissions, including RCOL, might suggest that learning needs, cognitive overload, and internal stalemate tend to grind commission momentum to a halt and that typical means for coordinating activities, such as liaison devices like staff and commissioner meetings, are insufficient to fuel the level of creativity and focus that commissions need to muster within a relatively short time-frame. On occasion, politicization within RCOL presented a solution to organizational ambiguity.

Roles within RCOL were defined by a high degree of adhocracy, not simply related to the need to innovate, but also because of the amorphous work terrain, coupled with the lack of strategic direction about where RCOLers were headed and how to get there. Improvisation was the main mode of work as RCOLers groped their way from one task to another. With improvisation, roles were evolved through experimentation, not fixed through prescription. For researchers, the assumption of writing tasks by default was the clearest example of role ambiguity. The writing process catalyzed the formation of in and
out groups among commissioners and researchers, the bias against educational "insiders" in both camps deciding which RCOLers had most influence in the process. The writing process also led to some blurring and conflict of roles, as the more influential researchers would sometimes challenge commissioner preferences and prevail in the process. The researchers were less a team and more a collection of individuals who coordinated their work on an ad hoc basis, as time constraints and personal inclination allowed. Writing skills and a direct connection to a commissioner, aided by factors such as value agreement and the chemistries of personalities, were seen as pivotal to researcher influence; a MET connection was viewed as a liability.

Leadership is one of the most important resources in the commission (Cairns, 1990; Cameron, 1993; Smith & Patterson, 1994). To paraphrase Cameron (1993), the main leadership task before many commissions is to exert some degree of control over a work domain laced with powerful centrifugal forces that threaten to pull the organization towards chaos. Within RCOL, co-chair leadership on an intellectual and executive front was compromised by decision-making by committee and the inability to work well together. The role of the executive director was also complex, with differing, if not conflicting, roles emerging: operations manager, disturbance handler and micropolitical manager, mediator, gatekeeper, enforcer, and advocate of her own preferences for inclusion in the Report.

The culture of a commission is often defined by the lack of a cohesive set of member values, attitudes, and behaviours (Cairns, 1990: Simeon, 1987). Commitment to an organization that is temporary and in a permanent state of flux, filled with persons who come from diverse organizations and who, after a report is released, will soon return to other work settings, is often beyond a commission's grasp. In its place is a reliance upon individuals who take a personal pride in their work (Cameron, 1993). RCOL's culture was a jerry-built amalgam of work cultures that members brought to it, overlaid with two features that defined its own organizational culture: improvisation and a hierarchy spawned by bias. If RCOL's organization was tenuous and fleeting, what glued it together were the informal links among its members, and a sense of solidarity in the face of organizational turbulence.

CONSTRUCTIVISM REVISITED

In Chapter 1, I presented a bare-bones outline of constructivism as the linking element by which I organized this study. At this point, I want to flesh out this concept and assess how various aspects of
RCOL activity can be redescribed using contributions from some scholars associated with constructivism.

In the first chapter, I noted Prestine's (1995) definition of constructivism, with its roots in cognitive learning theories that emphasize that knowledge is situated, being a product of both context and activity. She used this notion to describe the internalized building of a knowledge base as opposed to what she called the functionalist conception of knowledge or knowledge base, one that is external to the learner. She argued that an external knowledge base could be subsumed by the notion of "received" knowledge, an "identifiable, durable intellectual framework of a domain, inclusive of theories, abstractions, and systems of belief that transcend individuals and interpretations, and which exist prior to them, and, to a large extent, are beyond their control" (pp. 278-279). Prestine's model of cognition stressed that knowledge can only be understood as it is constructed by the individual mind (p. 279). She seemed to deny the possibility of some relationship between functionalist and constructivist approaches and she did not probe issues related to collective or group-structured learning.

But as Oxford (1997) underscored, a model such as Prestine's is only one variant in an array of ideas that carry the constructivist label. Oxford argued that constructivism is less a coherent theory and more a bundle of often contradictory "shapes" that shift in their meanings. According to Oxford (1997, p. 45), constructivism is composed of two different schools of thought that divide on the primacy of the individual as knowledge constructor or the knower of knowledge, as opposed to the knowledge constructor conceived as the whole society or as the individual "firmly embedded" in the group. She perceived some shortcomings in each school of thought:

The individual/psychological constructivists seldom directly addressed issues of power, authority, and the place of formal knowledge that are central to some versions of social/cultural constructivism...On the other hand, social/cultural constructivist perspectives were not uniformly well developed, and these perspectives sometimes paid little attention to individual knowledge construction (p. 45).

At one extreme, models of individual constructivism may appear solipistic; at the other extreme, understandings of social/cultural constructivism may present images of a self-less collective entity.

Oxford (1997) traced the preconstructivist ontological roots, (concerning the nature of being), in the perspective of idealism as elaborated by Plato, Hegel, Berkeley, and Kant:

Unlike the realists, who claimed to recognize the true or real nature of things in the world, the idealists asserted that reality exists only in ideas or ideals and that we cannot make firm
claims about any so-called external reality.

The preconstructivist epistemological roots, (about the nature of knowledge), emphasized that understanding can only come through the individual construction of meaning and the interpretation of sensory data in accordance with one's experience. Oxford (1997, p.38) cited the work of Locke and Kant as having a seminal impact on this understanding of the "origin, foundation, limits, and validity of knowledge." She also noted that within the realm of education constructivism has had a large impact through the work of Piaget (1954) and Von Glaserfield (1990, 1991) on individual cognition, and in the work of Dewey (1964, 1981) and Vygotsky (1978, 1987) on the social and contextual aspects. Such ideas have strongly influenced the whole language movement, the structuring of the teacher-student relationship, the pattern of classroom organization, and recent changes in the way that mathematics and science are being taught and learned. (See also Cobb, 1994, for a detailed examination of pedagogical applications).

Cobb (1994, p. 1049), differing somewhat from Oxford's treatment, contended that the realist position is not alien to constructivism, as he distinguished between what he terms "realist" and "radical" constructivist positions on the general function of cognition:

From the realist perspective, cognition is the process by which learners eventually construct mental structures that correspond to or match external structures located in the environment. In contrast, radical constructivists consider that cognition serves to organize the learner's experiential world rather than to discover ontological reality.

In Cobb's terms, Prestine's model seems to side with the logic of radical constructivism that emphasizes individual cognition and the search for meaning as an internalized process, both idiosyncratic and idiographic.

The general orientation of this dissertation leaned towards the social/cultural constructivist school in the sense that the analytical framework I used to understand and explain the experience of RCOLers was strongly influenced by authors whose work was of a similar orientation, such as Majone (1989, 1990), Feldman (1989), Weick (1979), Stone (1988), and Mahwinney (1993). In this dissertation, the constructivist approach encompassed the building of a knowledge base to support the three main challenges that RCOLers faced: the construction of public knowledge, the construction of multiple purposes, and the construction of organization. Although the general orientation of this dissertation was

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social constructivist, I also tried to account for the individual viewpoints of commissioners and researchers, and how each RCOLer perceived the work, individual roles, relationships with one another, and how each recounted her or his experience within RCOL.

In terms of the discussion and production of public knowledge leading to the Report, a knowledge base had to be created covering the various domains assigned by the mandate and other substantive areas where RCOLers decided to venture. As I detailed earlier, the sources for this creation encompassed intertwined fact, opinion, and values that came from available literature, studies, and from the media and the popular press; from presenters in hearings and from an array of experts; and from the knowledge bases, value orientations, and biases of commissioners and researchers that were worked out in the internal deliberations and the writing process. RCOLers also fashioned capacities that tied in with this first perspective, for research and evaluation. To enhance their credibility in the face of public scepticism and to promote a non-partisan acceptance of the Report, RCOLers engaged in a strategy for political mobilization aimed at creating a type of consensus for education reform. Finally, RCOLers had to organize themselves, largely from scratch, to accomplish these tasks, proceeding, largely in an ad hoc fashion, to create an instrument that paradoxically catalyzed and impeded member interaction.

To return to Prestine's model (1995) which posits a clear demarcation between functionalist and constructivist positions, at the outset of this study I claimed that I would employ both positions. This stance may seem equivocal to the reader, but I would contend that both positions were utilized by RCOLers to create their collective knowledge base and to understand it. In a functionalist sense, RCOLers needed to get themselves "up to speed" with what was known about the terrain they were studying. Thus, in Prestine's terms, RCOLers, especially researchers, spent much energy in assembling and discussing what may be described as "received" knowledge inclusive of theories, abstractions, and of all manner of information on a wide array of topics. This pressing need for information drove commissioners and researchers throughout the process to tap into a vast, if contested and ambiguous, external knowledge base about education in general and about publicly-funded education in Ontario in particular. It should be remembered that most commissioners did not enter the process with this detailed knowledge base.

To make this point another way, I would argue that RCOLers had to start somewhere in their knowledge search, and starting from what is known would seem a prudent first step for any policy-
oriented commission. In RCOL's case finding out what was known meant first of all casting their collective eyes outward. In the context of their roles as public argument-makers, moreover, RCOLers needed a detailed knowledge of their external world in order to examine and marshall evidence and they needed to couch their reasonings in terms of an on-going discourse that preceded and surrounded them and in which they joined as conversants. The vocabulary and terms of reference of this discourse were, in this sense, largely "received".

This external knowledge base, however hastily assembled and haphazardly perused and/or discussed, was filtered through the minds, subjectivities, and value preferences of RCOLers. For example, what was chosen to be discussed from the researcher-prepared binder of current literature, or what authors in the literature would be placed at the top of internally-defined hierarchy and cited as authorities, or what spin would be put on an array of data available from MET, or how various contexts should be perceived and written about, was defined by a process that was both individual- and social-constructivist. For RCOLers, then, the functionalist and constructivist positions on cognition tended to be less dichotomous and more reciprocal in describing how RCOLers thought and acted, as they tapped into and interpreted an external knowledge base and developed a working knowledge base of their own.

In Cobb's terms (1994), I would suggest that the experience of RCOLers could be characterized as reflecting both a realist and a radical constructivism. While reading and to some extent respecting the ontological reality of the larger world of publicly-funded education as they perceived it, RCOLers were also thinkers who used that knowledge to promote their own prescription for education reform, producing a vision of education that is rooted in the historical, political, economic, social, and pedagogical contexts in which they immersed themselves. This blending of realist and radical constructivism, I would contend, was most readily apparent in the two first perspectives employed in this study: knowledge construction and multiple purposes. The explanation of this blendedness, I would suggest, can be found in the complex relationship of RCOLers with a welter of realities that defined the policy and political superstructure they encountered, and of dilemmas that could be addressed but not solved. All of these elements beckoned RCOLers to view the knowledges of the "outside world" as important "givens" to be reckoned with, interpreted, and where possible accommodated into RCOL thinking. RCOLers were, after all, connected to this outside world by a web of culture and language, history, interests, identities, professional and political backgrounds, faith values, political values,
educational ideologies, and biases.

The internal dimension of RCOL, the organization as defined by the intersection of tasks with people, was characterized more by radical constructivism and less by a realist position. In this case, the connection between the external world and RCOL's internal world was less direct and less compelling. Within an organization largely unconstrained by standard operating procedures, and with a proclivity for adhocery, RCOLers were thrown together in an internal world where working with one another was defined by ambiguity, conflict, and by contested understandings of what the "reality" of working within RCOL was all about. Insider perceptions about their experiences were the stuff of the notion of "multiple realities" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 75). Thus the interview data I garnered, about the internal processes and about what motivated people to act as they did, exhibit a great deal of diversity in meanings. For example, how else could one explain some researchers' scepticism about Caplan's self-described cognitive "epiphany"? As I noted in Chapter 3, Caplan described starting his own learning process with a "tabula rasa" within the limits of his ideology, a reference that is literally connected with the seventeenth-century English philosopher John Locke's conception of cognition (Locke, 1947), here related by Oxford (1997, p. 38): ".[T]hat there is an external world of nature and that this world imprints 'simple ideas' onto the mind, which serves as a blank tablet, a piece of blotting paper, or an empty closet", and that these ideas become enriched through the experiences of individuals. As I also related in Chapter 3, some researchers viewed Caplan's epiphany as less Lockean in its genesis and more Machiavellian in its motivation. These two different understandings reflect no central or single truth in the organizational dimension but rather should be viewed as stories from different individuals about how they perceived a key aspect of the RCOL experience.

Following Oxford's reading of individual/psychological and social/cultural constructivism, I note some aspects of the RCOL experience that bear resemblance to some of the findings of several authors in those fields of study. I have adapted some of these conceptualizations to fit the particular circumstances of RCOL.

Kelly (1955), working from an individualist model, contended that individuals understand experience by grouping according to similarities and opposites (e.g., black/white, tall/short). He maintained that "personal constructs" function to give idiosyncratic meaning to the events, things, and people that individuals encounter (Oxford, 1997, p. 40). Within RCOL, in a social context, two
constructs of a "political" nature were created and operationalized that identified "knowers" in different camps. In Chapter 3, I identified these two constructs in terms of a progressive bias and of an insider/outsider bias. While a progressive bias tended to unify commissioner thinking in broad terms, it also acted as a barrier to views deemed not progressive. In terms of impact the insider/outsider bias separated categories of knowers into privileged and disprivileged camps in the public hearings, expert meetings, and internally within the ranks of commissioners and researchers.

According to Crockett (1965) and others, "cognitive complexity" means that "individuals with highly-developed constructs make more discriminations than those who see the world simplistically" (Oxford, 1997, p.41). Among RCOLers, as I showed in Chapters 4 and 5, the view was widely shared that the issues before them were of such complexity that "simple solutions" would not be appropriate for serious internal consideration. This view in effect took the form of a third, internally-defined, bias used by RCOLers to assess the acceptability of ideas for educational reform. For example, some presenters in hearings thought that eradicating whole language approaches or reverting to a traditional transmission of knowledge model or teacher-directed approach would solve the perceived decay in standards. Within RCOL, such critics were generally labelled as "simple solution" advocates by some key RCOLers, and their ideas were filtered out of serious consideration on these grounds. In effect, labelling an idea as a simple solution meant not having to investigate whether or not its claims had any validity.

Crockett (1965) also maintained that different "parts of the cognitive system of a single person can also differ in complexity" about different things, events, or persons (Oxford, 1997, p. 42). This concept can be applied on an organizational level. Given the diversity of topics within RCOL, and the sheer amount of information to be assimilated, understood, and interpreted, no single RCOLer, commissioner or researcher, had such a wide and deep knowledge base to claim expertise in all areas. One of the prominent knowledge gaps in commissioner knowledge that was not able to be breached, given time constraints, was related to curriculum and school organizations issues that were complex, interconnected, and, according to some internal observers, intractable. For these issues, commissioners, while engaged in various debates (e.g., secondary school issues), largely deferred to a researcher's views. In several other topic areas, dwindling numbers of researchers were forced by circumstances to tackle topics for which their initial knowledge was admittedly low and for which self-directed crash courses provided neither the time for serious reflection nor the range of information to allow for in-depth
understanding. Given the crisis pace and the deadline, the ability to write and a researcher connection to the co-chairs came to be prized over claims of expertise.

Prawat (1991, 1993, 1995), building on Dewey's notion that learning is primarily social and rooted in language, developed the concept of idea-based social constructivism. He argued that ideas or concepts are perceptual schemata "educating the awareness and attention and opening individuals to new situations and activities" (Oxford, 1997, p.43). Following Dewey's notion that learning material should be organized around broad, content-rich ideas, Prawat suggested that learning should centre around the exploration of "big ideas". As I detailed in Chapter 5, the development of the four-engines concept was seen by RCOLers as a key turning point in internal deliberations, helping to spark the conceptualization of the broad elements of the Report and to kick off the writing process. The big ideas/four engines helped focus commissioner "awareness and attention", and one might add enthusiasm, for what one co-chair described as the "exciting world of ideas".

For RCOL, big ideas (commissioner-driven) and the writing process (researcher-/Caplan-driven), provided what Vygotsky (1978) termed "scaffolding" or guideposts or supports that facilitate learning, a notion he adapted from Dewey. Unlike Vygotsky's model that posits scaffolding as having a limited time-frame with the aim of promoting learner autonomy, RCOL's scaffolding would carry the weight of core organizational activity from April to December 1994. Researcher micropolitics also played a large role in erecting and maintaining this scaffolding.

Oxford (1997) noted that accounting for individual differences in cognitive styles is not a strong feature of individual constructivism:

In their quest for general laws or universal descriptions of learning processes, constructivists have frequently paid little attention to individual differences...Big ideas or whole themes might be particularly relevant to global, intuitive learners but might not be as comfortable for analytic learners, who prefer to concentrate on details rather than big ideas, or for concrete-sequential learners, who need to learn in a very orderly, step-by-step manner (p. 60-61).

Cognitive styles, according to Messick (1994), are:

usually conceptualized as characteristic modes of perceiving, remembering, thinking, and problem-solving, reflective of information-processing regularities that develop in congenial ways around underlying personality trends. They are inferred from consistent individual differences in ways or organizing and processing information and experience (p. 868).
Before I discuss the individualist focus on cognitive styles within RCOL, I would submit that members of organizations may collectively adopt what may be termed an inter-individual or social learning style that is reflected in the way members think and work in groups. As I detailed in Chapter 5 in RCOL's case, an inductive learning process was dominant, partly imposed by the nature of the subject matter under study. The sheer volume, complexity, and ambiguity of all this information ensured that the interpretation process would not be easy, and that much probing would be required. Out of this difficult gestation period emerged some basic understandings by RCOLers about what they wanted to say in the Report. Majone's public argumentation model (1989), which I argued had some validity in understanding the work of RCOL, inclines argument-makers to "discover" their values and preferences and disinclines them to structure argumentation in a deductive fashion. An inductive process was also set in motion also because Caplan, combining will and authority, was as co-chair able to project the needs of his own self-described learning style on to the organization's agenda from May 1993 to April 1994. The inductive approach dominant within RCOL followed the sequence of learning that many constructivists see as in harmony with their tradition: exploration, discovery, skill acquisition, and concept acquisition, albeit in a spiral-like, iterative, and disjointed fashion. Inductiveness also emerged as a general mode of reasoning because most commissioners were committed to contribute a radical plan for education reform, and this motivation promoted divergent thinking. Divergent thinking within RCOL was also stimulated by the various professional backgrounds of commissioners and researchers, shaping in different ways how issues were perceived and how they should be tackled.

Despite the dominance of a messy divergent induction as the collective mode of processing information within RCOL, the findings of this study suggest that Murphy, Glaze, and a few researchers would have preferred a more deductive approach more in keeping with their own cognitive styles. To them, this meant a careful and detailed discussion of values and priorities, and the elucidation of a vision for education reform, should have preceded both the discussion of the nuts-and-bolts of policy advice and the writing process. Within RCOL, differences in cognitive styles produced a palpable sense of frustration and uneasiness for those who thought that the process needed more deductive discipline.

Oxford (1997, p. 59) contended that "most constructivists have emphasized the cognitive over the affective aspects of learning, particularly over the 'negative' affective aspects such as anxiety, fear, and self-doubt." The findings of this dissertation suggest that affective aspects played a significant role
in knowledge construction in a number of ways. As I explained in Chapter 4, the hearings left their mark on commissioners and researchers alike not simply because of what was said but also because the message emotively struck at the hearts of RCOLers, particularly when the messengers were parents, students, and individual teachers. The affective dimension of the hearings helped consolidate understandings of the education system particularly when its impacts have been perceived as careless, hurtful, or harmful. The hearings emerged as a critical learning device precisely because of this cathartic dimension. School visits also provided an enduring image of students' creative enthusiasm that helped commissioners connect their understandings of pedagogical theory with its school-level impact on students. The affective dimension helped establish bonds of solidarity between RCOLers and the subjects of their inquiry, and added a type of knowledge to the mix that held its impact long after the hearings process and school visits were rolled up. In Chapter 5 I showed that the fight for ideas exacted a heavy emotional toll as each commissioner and researcher fought to be heard, and as each struggled for survival, for respect, and for recognition in a rough-and-tumble process that had Darwinian overtones. In that same chapter I also explained that certain ideas, and indeed some major issues, were perceived as having a "sexiness" to them that motivated particular RCOLers to champion them in unstinting fashion. Ideas in this fashion were not only perceived, they were also felt and personally identified with.

A feminist approach to epistemology has yielded fresh ways at looking at social constructivism. In a study on the sociopolitical processes by which public knowledge is constructed, Alcoff and Potter (1993) emphasized that understanding social constructivism means that more is at issue than epistemology: "[P]olitics intersect traditional epistemology" and "social values influence knowledge" (p. 13). This same point, but without the feminist angle, was made by proponents of symbolic interactionism such as Blumer (1969) who contended that "socially derived meanings affect the ways in which people interpret themselves, other people, events, and objects" (Oxford, 1997, p. 43). I discussed some aspects of the interactionist approach in Chapter 4 in connection with assigning meaning to RCOL's public consultations. Following Alcoff, Potter, and Blumer, I would stress that the main parameters of search for knowledge within RCOL were defined largely in political terms including such considerations as: the governmentally-imposed definition of the mandate's substance and time-lines, the constraints imposed upon RCOL related to funding and staffing, the composition of the Commission in terms of a politically-based and progressively-biased matrix system, and the abortive proposal of the Minister to use RCOL's
Report in the NDP re-election campaign. Internally, identity politics, not gender-based, but insider/outside based, played a major role in ordaining whose knowledges would be privileged. That the insider and outsider dichotomy was ambiguous did not stop its potency in separating the ranks of commissioners and researchers. The process was also constrained and catalyzed by micropolitical activity, running along the commissioner-researcher axis. In RCOL's search for knowledge, ideas were also affirmed, rejected, or modified, as they were filtered, sifted, and sorted according to a range of public values defined, in a multitude of ways, externally and internally. In this knowledge construction, the Constitution Act was both a source of ambiguity and constraint, and RCOLers' perceptions about what was politically appropriate were shaped by the policy initiatives of successive provincial governments. The commissioners' commitment to political inclusivity through the hearings process and through outreach in effect ordained the role of parents, students, and of those outside of traditional "loops" as legitimate "knowers" whose contributions to policy development should be respected. In terms of knowledge orientations, RCOLers valued "soft" knowledge over "hard".

Oxford's (1997) contribution to understanding constructivism and my selective application of it suggest to me that both the individualist and social constructivist schools offer much food for thought for the future study of organizations. Oxford's perceptive reading of the field, particularly the weaknesses of each school, has, I think, been validated by the findings of this dissertation. While several constructivist authors have made significant contributions to epistemology, I would suggest that the main weakness of the field, for the purposes of this dissertation, was that no single constructivist model was sufficient to explain constructivism as I applied the notion to the study of RCOL. One needs, I think, an array of such models, together with concepts outside of constructivism, to understand and explain the experience of people in an organizational setting. With this suggestion in mind, I turn next to consider, briefly, the contribution of the late OISE professor Thomas Greenfield to the study of organizations and how his ideas, which bear resemblance to constructivist approaches, can be used to interpret the RCOL experience.

A GREENFIELDIAN POSTSCRIPT

Coming to grips with RCOL is, I think, significantly enhanced by the phenomenology-based scholarship of Thomas Greenfield (1993) who contended that organizations are not "structures subject
to universal laws" but are rather "cultural artifacts dependent on the specific meaning and intention of people within them" (p.4). Like social constructivists, Greenfield 's understanding of organizations focused on the people who worked in them and what they did and what they said about what they did. For Greenfield, organizations "themselves are expressions of how people believe they should relate to each other" (p.55). But like individual constructivists and like his profound intellectual influence, Max Weber, Greenfield never lost sight of the individual in the collectivity: "The self cannot escape organizations. Indeed, self is organization in a profound sense, though the self may behave and feel quite differently as it moves from organization - from fragment to fragment of its personal world" (p.54).

Unlike some individual constructivists, Greenfield avoided formulating derived theories or propositions about organizations based on universality; instead, he urged that each organization should be seen as a unique setting, with a particular mix of people, in a certain point in time. For Greenfield, like radical constructivists, organizations should not be reified as some sort of organic creatures with goals, purposes, and structures because, outside of people's involvement in them, organizations have no ontological reality. It's people that articulate goals, instill purpose, and comprise the organization.

For constructivists, the question of "What is real?" is of central concern. Greenfield (1993, p. 57) contended that this question was a "standard" one in organizational research, one that perhaps led researchers in the wrong direction. He supported Weick's (1979) understanding that what is "real" in organizational terms means dealing with how people see the organizations in which they work, how they relate to one another, and how they not only perceive and adapt to their environment, but more importantly how they attempt to control it.

With this brief description of Greenfield's understanding of organization as a cultural artifact, I now proceed with a summary of the RCOL experience that is tinted with the insights of this understanding.

Through governmental prerogative RCOL was established in law and slowly staffed with individuals from various backgrounds. Some key and not-so-key figures would drift in and out of the process, inducing a general tone of disjointedness from start to finish. The co-chairs in particular resented the Minister's agenda, the Ministry's control of the budget, and the imposed secondment of MET staff. They would tolerate no further encroachment on their turf, and would pay the Minister back in kind by refusing to get aboard his amalgamation bandwagon. For RCOLers, some contexts were perceived as
constraints and other as opportunities, depending on the reading given to them. Commissioners decided to interpret their mandate in a loose fashion and they embarked in directions of their own choosing, the Minister's detailed terms of reference notwithstanding. RCOLers could be categorized by their job titles such as co-chairs, commissioners, executive director, researchers, and support staff, but no job descriptions existed, ambiguity about role expectations abounded, and players carved out their roles. RCOLers' work involved orientation, holding public hearings, meeting with experts and with representatives from other organizations, internally debating, agreeing on the lines of public argumentation, writing and producing a report, and talking to the media. What was being discussed in hearings, expert meetings, and in internal deliberations was most often, but not always, an ambiguous mixture of values, fact, and opinion. Probing and interpretation were thus necessary but differences about what to probe and about assigned meanings abounded, and meetings to resolve these issues often failed to deliver the goods.

Internal rules and taken-for-granted understandings about decision-making and about interpersonal relationships were created, interpreted, enforced, and resisted. Tasks were invented, adapted, jettisoned, and subverted. Whether individuals chose to work alone, in dyads, in groups, or with all members, from the co-chairs on down, was subject to individual will, preference, time, and to where one stood in an invisible hierarchy. Most chose to follow the solo route because participation in formal commissioner meetings was deemed either painful, inefficient, or both. This relative isolation was alleviated by many micro-negotiations in halls, offices, over coffee and lunch, and through E-mail and telephone. Time was both a constraint and catalyst for purposive organizational action.

When organizational action faltered, member micropolitics in small groupings (particularly researcher) galvanized it, but with no lasting resolution, and efforts of this nature had to be repeated. Members exclaimed that their experiences of working inside RCOL were unlike any other professional setting they had worked in. For some members, relationships with one another were relatively unencumbered exchanges regardless of formal status, and for some the collective decision-making process was perceived as a rudimentary democracy. For other members, however, their RCOL experience was a Kafkaesque nightmare where an individual is charged with an unspecified crime and subsequently held indefinitely in penitential limbo. For some members, RCOL offered an opportunity to be creative and to extend one's talents; for others, the organization was a shackler of initiative and a disrespecer of
professional experience. When some members tired of being treated like outcasts, they staged an early exit. The organizational culture was less cohesive than fragmented, partly borrowed from previous organizational experiences and partly jerry-built as time wore on. This working culture and style discouraged the internal acceptance of outsider contributions, with the notable exception of the contributions from outside readers whose views on style and content were taken seriously.

Through political mobilization and a media strategy, RCOLers chose to shape and influence their political environment and not simply to adapt to it. The document they produced was a compromised work-in-progress in which some commissioners had a greater say than others, and in the writing process key researchers played a leading role, much to their surprise. Many of this document's recommendations did not fare well in the hands of the Minister to whom it was handed, with the timing and outcome of a provincial election, and the Minister's own agenda, constraining a more sympathetic reading. In the hands of the next government's Minister, the Report received even less a receptive hearing, constrained by the neo-conservative ideological direction of the new government.

In this study I have paid attention to each of these activities that might be labelled as organizational contexts, processes, and products. But it is really the story of how RCOLers organized themselves, and about how they related as individuals and about how they felt as a result of their experiences. It is significant, I think, that while I have in this study attempted to portray the collective RCOL experience, the truth is that each RCOLer's story, and each individual's version of what was done and what happened and what motivated them, varied according to the experience of individuals. What I therefore have written about the experience of RCOLers as an organization, as a collectivity, are inferences and generalizations I have deduced from individual experiences, myself included. In this story, the construction of knowledge, of purpose, and of organization, moving beyond Alcock and Potter (1993), is about the intersection of epistemology and the search for understanding and meaning, about political and social values and ideas, about power, authority, bias, will, emotion, and chance, about ambiguities and certainties, about contexts, interests, and identities, about politics and micropolitics, about organizations and the formal and informal sides of them, about laws and the Constitution, about creativity and its suppression, and about inclusion and exclusion. This story is also about individuals, groups, and a temporary collectivity known as the Royal Commission on Learning.
A FINAL NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

The Greenfield-tinted postscript above may strike the reader as somewhat puzzling, given my Mintzberg-tinted treatment of RCOL as an organization in Chapter 8. If Greenfield eschewed the reification of organizations, Mintzberg's work in this field (1979, 1983) went in the opposite direction, and his typology of organizations, a synthesis of literature and studies, was based on the notion that organizations as structures are patterned by the convergence of coordinating mechanisms and design variables to form five, pure-type configurations. Mintzberg could not make this assertion without staking the ontological claim that organizations have some basis in reality apart from the people who inhabit them. While my juxtaposition of Mintzberg and Greenfield seems to invite contradiction, and indeed if I accepted all of each author's claims, epistemological and ontological, this combination would be unacceptable. From a pragmatic level, as a student of a particular organization and its people in a given time frame, I chose to acknowledge these differences between Mintzberg and Greenfield but not to be governed by them. My role as a student of RCOL was neither to fly someone else's flag nor to salute it, however learned and honoured that individual might be. My task was first of all to observe and to participate, to listen and talk, to relate others' stories and my own. After I completed these tasks, my next task in a constructivist sense was, for my own purposes, to sift and sort through this data, to organize and categorize what I'd found in rough categories and to refine these over time. Refining required ample amounts of cogitation on my part, and just as importantly, this process obliged me to search the literature for concepts and ideas that would help me to understand what it was that I was looking at. Only a rather broad reading of the literature could provide me with a sufficient range of concepts and ideas that could be used to understand and explain RCOL. In this search, concepts or bundles of ideas that I thought were useful about RCOL as an organization came from a number of sources. To name some of the more salient of these authors: Mintzberg (1979, 1983) on the notion of structure; March and Olsen (1976, 1984, 1989) on SOPs, routines, and neo-institutionalism; DiMaggio and Powell (1991) on neo-institutionalism; and Greenfield (1993) on the phenomenological perspective that values individual understandings and the uniqueness of settings. Each of these authors afforded me with a starting point from which to organize my written analysis, and each suggested different ways of looking at the RCOL experience. Just as I rummaged through the contributions of constructivists, I selected various insights from authors who may be described as belonging to various camps of organizational theory and of policy analysis. I would argue
that if the notion of grounded theory means anything, it means that analysis and conceptualization should not only follow data collection but that it should reflect the data. Choosing and shaping the literature to fit the data, I would argue, requires the scholar to be less inclined to "buy the whole package" of any one thinker, and to treat any thinker's contributions in a specific field as finite, provisional, and contingent.

This understanding also means that the student should be absolved from the obligation of kneading data and literature into an internally-consistent synthesis. On this topic, the final word goes to philosopher Richard Rorty (1989, p. xiv) who in another context asserted that:

If we could bring ourselves to accept the fact that no theory about the nature of Man or Society or Rationality, or anything else, is going to synthesize Nietzsche with Marx or Heidegger with Habermas, we could begin to think of the relation between writers on autonomy and writers on justice as being like the relation between two kinds of tools - as little in need of synthesis as paintbrushes and crowbars.

For the purposes of this dissertation, the contributions of various authors have been treated with the respect that a craftsman accords a paintbrush, a crowbar, a hammer, or a saw. All are useful tools that can be utilized to accomplish the diverse ends for which they were designed. A competent craftsman, I would suggest, needs a wide array of tools and should use them to suit the specifications of the task.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

In terms of future scholarship on policy-oriented commissions, the findings of this dissertation suggest a number of possible avenues of inquiry. The most obvious suggestion is that the study of future policy-oriented commissions might profit from a multiple-perspectives treatment similar to that employed for this study. While some of the literature on commissions clearly compares with the experience of RCOL, enough differences exist along several perspectives to suggest that these differences could be accounted for using some type of comparative analysis through the three perspectives I employed.

Other perspectives, from far-ranging fields, could be employed to probe the unique cultures of commissions. For example, I seriously toyed with the idea of comparing the endeavours of RCOLers with the way that the American film director Robert Altman makes films. Altman, who conceived and directed such films as McCabe and Mrs. Miller, M.A.S.H., Nashville, The Player, and Ready to Wear (Prête à Porter), typically starts a film with only the barest sketch of the plot which is fleshed out as the director, writers, and players interact. Actors are often given only the slightest direction as to how to perform their
roles, and are encouraged to improvise. This improvisation often takes the form of inventing dialogue and expanding their roles within a film, and conflict is sometimes rampant on the set as each actor attempts to expand his or her role, and the amount of film time and dialogue accorded to each is thus a negotiated variable. What the Altman scenario captures, in addition to an ambiguous work domain and role ambiguity and improvisation, is something that is largely missing from this dissertation: the feeling that I had, shared by some others, that participating in RCOL was a creative experience the likes of which few RCOLers had experienced before, and are unlikely to experience again. Like some Altman films (taste is, after all, subjective), some commissions are able to tie up the loose ends of adhocracy into a creative package that "works". For some other commissions, however, the ambiguities, role conflicts, and improvisations do not coalesce into a pattern that makes sense or has substantial meaning for their audience. Sometimes royal commissions, like Altman films, click, and sometimes they do not.

If Altman or an equivalent is thought to be too large a stretch, there are still other avenues of scholarship worthy of pursuit. The whole question of knowledge construction, if one wants to confine oneself to a single area, is certainly rich. From the literature on commissions, one can detect a large gap in articulating the nexus between ideas, values, and individuals and the role that bias and micropolitics may play within a commission. The literature is quite shy about attributing names to voices, and voices to interests, and it is my belief that if commissioners serve on a publicly-appointed body and receive compensation from public coffers, they should also be accountable for their words and actions not simply to a government or to public opinion, but also to academe. Such an academic scrutiny should rise above the level of the short-term perspective, or the politically-expedient, and move beyond how an issue plays in the strongly-biased lenses of the media. The exercise of public power in a democracy would be better served if bodies with extraordinary, if temporary powers, are examined in a more scholarly fashion.

If knowledge construction is not to a future researcher's liking, then the area of multiple purposes suggests a number of other possibilities. The use of RCOL as a political instrument by the commissioners may be a portent of the future worthy of study. Because RCOL was thrust into a hostile environment, the commissioners developed a strategy to enhance the Commission's credibility, to promote the necessity for educational reform, and to influence a stakeholder and public sense of ownership of the Report. As of late, commissions of inquiry (such as Krever and Somalia) have been hamstrung by legal contestation and/or government truncation of time lines. Future commissions, both judicial and policy-oriented, may
operate in an environment that is also hostile, and their members may have to initiate "evasive action" of a political nature if they want to fulfill their mandate, as they interpret it. Such strategies aimed at survival, credibility, and efficacy would be worthy of scholarship, and this particular purpose or function of a commission may be a wave of the future, as commissioners perceive themselves less as neutral adjudicators of values and facts and more as political actors in their own right, simply out of necessity.

The question of the role of research in commissions might also profit from the role of scholarship: certainly the case of RCOL, as in other policy-related commissions, the question of what types of knowledge choices are put before commissioners needs further probing. Some questions worth pondering are: What alternatives, if any, are presented? How are they presented? How are conflicting alternatives resolved? How exactly does bias screen out any alternatives from consideration? Another interesting perspective that deserves greater scholarship is the role of the media in the interpretation of what a commission is all about to stakeholders and the general public, as well as what types of spin various media favour in their treatment of commissions. The media, it should be recalled, are the main source of public information about commissions and major shapers of public information about commissions. The media are also a main external evaluative resource available to commission members. On the bully-pulpit front, research questions could be posed as to what cathartic and debate-leading functions a commission might serve. While this dissertation focussed on member perceptions of impacts of this function, demonstrating this impact vis à vis stakeholders and the attentive public may prove more difficult.

The commission as an organization also offers a number of opportunities for further research. One large question that could be probed is the role of adhocery in commissions in terms of work technologies, roles, politicization, and culture. Commissions, at least from the literature available, would seem to vary on the continuum from standardized bureaucracy to full-blown adhocacy. What factors contribute to this variation and what are the impacts of structural variables on internal deliberations and knowledge construction? How does any one commission vary on this continuum? To what extent does the degree of adhocery impede/catalyze organizational action? Probably the most important question of an organizational nature is that of leadership, a topic that is alluded to in the literature on commissions. RCOL's experience in this area suggests that much more study, and much more thought, need to be applied to the issue of intellectual and executive leadership. One inference from this study is that the greater the degree of adhocery of a commission, the greater its leadership needs. The specific roles that
may be ascribed to leadership need further elucidation, for chairs, commissioners, and executive directors, particularly given the findings that suggest that different phases of commissions require rather different sets of skills. The role of executive director is particularly intriguing for future study, if the complexity of roles assumed within RCOL is any indication.

In terms of the practice of policy-oriented royal commissions, the findings of this dissertation would suggest a number of issues worthy of serious consideration. Time as a finite resource is an overriding factor in many commissions, and care should be taken about stipulating deadlines; no "outsider" can properly assess how much time a commission needs to fulfil its mandate properly. A major consideration in the framing of time-lines is whether the types of information that a commission needs exist; if not, a long time frame and a sizable research budget will be required to generate this knowledge. When formulating mandates, great care should be taken to make the terms of reference as pointed and concrete as possible, and to ensure that the number of topics to be covered be kept to a minimum. The natural tendency of commissioners is to embellish upon these terms of reference, and a wide, loosely-defined mandate only heightens the ambiguity that commissions face. Governments should not necessarily add to the level of ambiguity and uncertainty that is inherent in much of what commissions do.

The composition of a commission requires great thought. If outsider or lay knowledge is valued, policy-makers should understand that the learning needs for outsider commissioners will absorb much of a commission's mandated time. If policy-makers insist on relatively short time-frames for inquiry, then they would be wiser to opt for expertise as the main criterion for commissioners, but the exclusive reliance on expertise can either promote a view that is blinkered from fresh thinking or augment the zealous of professional true believers. A balance of expertise and outsideness is probably the wisest route. The use of matrix criteria to choose commissions will for political reasons probably continue, but given the plurality of interests at play on complex issues, great care should be taken that both insider and outsider interests are balanced within a commission, and that no one group of interests is allowed to monopolize internal debates. The size of commissions is a related issue: the larger the commission, the more interests can be accommodated, but this invites enormous problems for coordination and for reaching consensus.

Intellectual and executive leadership within a commission, given the proclivity for adhocery, is probably the most important consideration. The notion of splitting authority at the top by appointing co-
chairs, as well as the notion of decision-making by committee, may undermine the obvious need for centralized direction to counter the centrifugal forces at work. A tension percolates between authority and democracy within commissions, and policy-makers should perhaps consider erring on the side of authority. The leadership needs of a commission include the internal control of an adequate budget as well as the choice in staffing; the inability of a chair to have authority for these issues undermines the arm's-length relationship, does not allow for the repositioning of funds to meet inevitable contingencies and changes of strategies, and thwarts the probability of the development of a strong team approach within a commission.

Researchers need leadership and coordination too, and a director of research should be appointed to oversee the research design. A key question of research design is whether original research will be commissioned or a synthesis orientation will be undertaken. This design should include a capacity for soft and hard knowledge, and to guard against insularity, researchers should be involved in participating in all the major streams of activity, particularly public hearings and the occasional commissioner meeting. The research design would profit from the generation of at least two alternative ways of looking at major issues, written by a combination of in-house and outside authors, with a healthy respect for the notion of a devil's advocate. If a written report is required, it must be realized that writing of this type is the toughest assignment that any commission member faces, requiring a high-level of skills to synthesize information and to argue in an extended format. Not all commissioners and researchers are equal in this respect. Decisions should be made at an early stage about who is to write and some understanding needs to be reached early on as to which areas each writer should undertake. Once on stream, writing tasks require a level of coordination and direction that individual writers cannot provide solely on an ad hoc basis, as cohesiveness and continuity will not emerge unless they become a conscious concern of the organization.

All this practical advice notwithstanding, policy-makers should understand that any royal commission they appoint will develop in ways that do not conform according to the norms and routines with which they are familiar, and so some degree of ad hocery inside a commission should be encouraged. Saddling a commission with all the trappings of civil bureaucracy would only serve to sap its unique vigour and culture, and ultimately whittle away its capacity for innovative thinking in the service of policy advice.
This dissertation raises a number of issues specific to publicly-funded education that might profit from further research, of which I suggest just a few.

One area of research in publicly-funded education is probing the construction of public values in the policy-making process. In the context of RCOL, this issue was the most difficult to conceptualize, as I found that the hierarchical approach had serious limitations in explaining the actual ways that ideologies, core values, and educational objectives evolved and how different levels related to one another. Are other conceptualizations of the role of ideas and values in specific debates more appropriate?

Accountability may be the public value of the 1990s, but in education the support for its various manifestations is largely driven by outsider stakeholders and by the media. Accountability, when one looks beyond all the rhetoric about it, is largely an imposed value on Ontario's educational policy community, reluctantly accepted by many inside stakeholders. How much impact will accountability have on the way that public education works in the future? As an imposed value, will its harder edges that are perceived as threatening ultimately be blunted by insiders? Or will insiders of a once tightly-knit policy community find that the keys to their kingdom are no longer in their hands?

Another "outside" public value is the support for public choice. Whether in the form of charter schools, black-focus schools, or religious-funding for non-Catholic schools, public choice had enough advocates in the public hearings to suggest that this issue will not soon disappear. Although no resolution was found within RCOL on public choice, the degree of internal conflict that its discussion provoked suggests that this debate is far from over, and that beneath the smoke the fire still burns. Can the accommodation of public choice be resolved within the ranks of the educational policy community or will it imposed upon it?

I was intrigued by how the notion of community was handled within RCOL in terms of composition and internal deliberations. The recognition of the claim of community identity and the recognition of the rights and needs of particular communities within RCOL was largely tied to constitutionally-secured rights and to sensitivities to issues related to multiculturalism and diversity. The recognition of a wider claim of community that encompasses a societal breadth was, on the other hand, largely unexplored territory. Is the claim to community identity and needs in the future to be restricted only to certain communities? Another dimension of community that needs to be explored is the relationship among tradition, history, and community identification. In this respect, one should ponder
Murphy's observation (Interview, 1995) that a missing voice on the Commission was that of the white, Protestant majority whose religious, political, and cultural values were traditionally dominant in public education. Have a set of court decisions or educators' perceptions of them, the embrace of secularization by public school educators and by governmental officials, and a1 abiding sensitivity to multiculturalism, stripped traditionally-defined communities of their need for recognition within publicly-funded education? Is public choice or an exit option the only means left to this particular community, burdened as it is by the sense of some observers, at least, that its heritage has been betrayed?

The role of the Ministry of Education and Training in the policy community is ripe for investigation. While I cited some scholarly perceptions that suggest that the Ministry has exerted a dominant influence in this community for more than three decades, I also related anecdotal evidence to suggest that this may no longer be true. After years of internal reorganization, downsizing, start-and-stop policy making, and challenges to authority, what is the state of MET and its relationship to the policy community today? Will the trend towards a highly centralized "administrative agency" (Manzer, 1994) continue, and what consequences may this have for politics in the educational community?

In the aftermath of RCOL the institutional map of publicly-funded education in Ontario has been re-drawn. New public bodies like the Educational Quality and Accountability Office and the College of Teachers need to be assessed from a scholarly perspective. Will these new bodies function as RCOL commissioners and policy-makers hope, or will they become co-opted by organised inside stakeholders for their own purposes, their missions blunted and distorted? Older institutions like school boards face enormous challenges because of amalgamation and changes in the funding model. Were Cooke and Snobelen justified in their amalgamation crusade or will amalgamation pose enormous hurdles to the development of district-based educational leadership and ethos? What happens when a cornerstone of local accountability is emasculated through centralised fiat? Will school councils fill this vacuum, or will they evolve along a different path?

A final area of possible research is related to RCOL's long-term impact and influence. The legacy of the Hall-Dennis report, real or imagined, remains a powerful symbol of a paradigmatic shift in Ontario education, and its presence stalked RCOL's commissioners over the course of the process. Several years hence, how will the legacy of RCOL's Report be construed by stakeholders and implementors at different levels of the system?
CONCLUDING REMARKS TO THIS STUDY

In this dissertation I explored the Royal Commission on Learning from the conceptual framework of constructivism — of knowledge, of multiple purposes, and of organization. Within each of these perspectives I introduced a number of pieces of a conceptual, analytical, or pragmatic nature to shed light on specific findings. RCOL's work domain was complex and interconnected, and only a few of the stones covering the terrain of publicly-funded education in Ontario remained unturned in the wake of this collective enterprise. The convoluted and lengthy nature of this dissertation undoubtedly tests the limits of patience and powers of concentration of even the keenest and most sympathetic reader, but I think this study is a faithful reflection on RCOL's substance and process during its turbulent quest from May 1993 to January 1995.

In this study, I ventured into areas that examine the particularity of a specialized public instrument (a royal commission) established to inquire into an important area of public and private concern (publicly-funded education). The issues I addressed are a composite of both of these areas, involving the discussion of contexts, mandate, composition, orientation, public consultations, internal deliberations, the writing process, problem identification and the learning process, public values and ideologies, four value-laden debates, multiple purposes, and organization. These findings were unearthed during my eighteen-month stint as participant observer at Ontario's Royal Commission on Learning and fleshed out through document analysis and interviews. I feel privileged to have been given the opportunity to tell the story of RCOL and of its commissioners and researchers. RCOLers persevered against formidable odds, bloodied yet unbowed, to accomplish most of what they had set out to do. I hope I have given you, the reader, an insight into the complexity of tasks with which RCOLers had to wrestle, along with the contested, dilemmatic, and ambiguous nature of publicly-funded education. I also trust I have shed some light on the nature of policy-oriented commissions that may be of use for practice and for further research.
APPENDIX A

RCOL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.

1) Thinking back to when you first started at the Commission, what did you see as the task that the Commission collectively had to accomplish?

2) What expectations did you have for the Commission as you commenced your work? Did they change? Why? Why not?

3) How would you describe your role in the Commission? Did this role change? Why? Did you experience role conflict? Why?

4) How did the Commission, as an organization, divide the work and coordinate it?

5) What were the major constraints of working within the Commission?

6) In order to map out the learning process within the Commission, I'd like you to choose a major educational issue addressed by the Commission with which you are very familiar and describe how it came to be identified as a problem, and how the solutions were developed. Do you think that this issue reflects the typical fashion by which problems were identified and solutions formulated within the Commission? Why? Why not?

7) How and when did the overall vision or perspective of the report emerge?

8) How would you describe the organizational culture within the Commission? (The shared/not shared beliefs, values, and attitudes such as values about reaching consensus, attitudes about working together, etc.)

9) What factors or strategies promoted individual influence within the Commission? What factors or strategies inhibited influence?

10) Were there any key incidents or circumstances that played a major role in the deliberations of the Commission?

11) If you were the sole author of the report, how would it be the same or different than the report submitted to the Minister in January 1995?

12) How did the Commissioners conceive of the Commission as a political instrument and how did they direct or operate the Commission as a political instrument?

13) How would you describe the role of the Commission in addressing differing values or
perspectives of stakeholders?

14) To what extent do you think the report satisfied the expectations of major stakeholders? Please explain.

15) In retrospect, what purpose or purposes do you think the Commission served?

16) Did political and economic contexts have an influence on Commission deliberations? Please explain.

17) Are there any metaphors that come to mind when you describe your role or the collective activity within the Commission or in describing the purposes of the Commission?

18) Is there anything else about the Commission or your work at the Commission that we haven't talked about yet that you'd like to discuss?
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEWS


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