

Jeffrey Boarding School by Hugh J. Robertson and S. C. Murray, 26 Feb 1918). A church led investigation found that there was no support for the allegation of a family compact existing at the school. They argued that the staff members had expressed their loyalty towards Mrs. Dodds. They described the most likely source of any existing tension: "It seemed however clearly evident that there was a nervous anxiety on the part of the Matron for the success of the School, and a tendency to worry over the details of all departments that has led her to unnecessary interference with both pupils and members of the staff. This lack of tact in general management - understood and overlooked by some - is tacitly resented by others" (NAC, RG 10, SF, Reel C7922, Vol 6187, File 461-1, pt 1, Copy - Report of Commission of Presbytery appointed to investigate conditions at Cecilia Jeffrey Boarding School by Hugh J. Robertson and S. C. Murray, 26 Feb 1918). No steps were taken to remedy the situation: within a number of months the Dodds retired.

Crowstand School

The first two principals of the Crowstand Boarding School, George Laird and C. W. Whyte, had their share of disagreements and clashes with their staff members.

In the first two years of Laird's principalship, school correspondence focused on daily operations. Then, concerns of mismanagement and immorality among students began to surface. The teacher, May Armstrong wrote to the head of the Winnipeg FMC, to make him aware of the lack of order at the school, particularly with the training provided to the boys in outside work. She admitted that there had been disagreements between her and Laird (UCA-Wpg, ABP, E 1257-1258, E. M. Armstrong to Mr. Baird, 19 Aug 1891). A man, W. J. Wright, was hired to act as the farm instructor and to assist in the supervision

of the boys.

Wright had been at the school for a matter of months, when he acknowledged that he and Laird were experiencing interpersonal problems, which for Wright, at least, were “very unpleasant” (UCA-Wpg, ABP, E 1491, W. J. Wright to Mr. Beard [sic], 5 Jan 1892). He provided a couple of examples of inconsistent rules and of how the tasks he was responsible for were changed from day-to-day by Laird. Wright requested that the FMC give him specific duties, apart from Laird. He also had observed Laird clashing with other staff members, some who were “not so able to bear it” (UCA-Wpg, ABP, E 1491, W. J. Wright to Mr. Beard [sic], 5 Jan 1892). Rev. Baird believed that this lack of harmony could largely be blamed on the huge responsibility which Laird shouldered: “Naturally I suppose any man harassed with the worries that beset Mr. Laird in the management of so large an institution is not always the master of his own temper” (UCA-Wpg, ABP, E 1525-1526, [Baird] to Mr. Wright, 20 Jan 1892). Even though Wright’s proposition of a separation of duties may have enabled Wright to discharge his duties with minimal interference, the FMC did not consider it a wise move: “... if we did attempt any division which would confirm the estrangement between you, it would defeat the very object of your work at the Crowstand, namely, to teach the gospel of love and charity to the Indians” (UCA-Wpg, ABP, E 1525-1526, [Baird] to Mr. Wright, 20 Jan 1892). Baird hinted that Laird may be leaving the school within a few months, and thus called for Wright to exercise patience.

The assistant matron, Florence McLean, was also experiencing difficulty with Laird. She insisted that Laird was quick to become angry and was inclined to use insulting

language towards her (UCA-Wpg, ABP, E 1554-1555, Miss McLean to Mr. Baird, 3 Feb 1892). In order to avoid this persistent uneasiness, McLean considered her resignation as the only solution. When Laird announced his own resignation, McLean withdrew her own. The remaining staff looked forward to the prospect of working with a oneness that was not possible under George Laird.

The staff, along with the new principal, C. W. Whyte, avoided any real friction for about a year. Then, in May 1893, Wright put forth his concerns in a letter. The situation was no longer agreeable, but rather there was "a dead pull and hard feelings all the time" (UCA-Wpg, ABP, F 233, W. J. Wright to Prof. Baird, 22 May 1893). Wright found Whyte difficult to take orders from. Whyte would give inconsistent orders, devising plans one day and changing them the next. This was unacceptable to Wright and he admitted that he no longer took the interest in the work that he should.

Rev. Baird wrote to Wright, urging him to try to avoid further conflict:

... the members of the staff should work in harmony - I am aware it is difficult for all to do this when the head of the staff is not judicious but it is as unspeakably important for every interest of the mission that there should be genuine cooperation that we cannot excuse any member of the staff who does not pursue this policy. We hope therefore that you will do your utmost to keep upon cordial terms with Mr. Whyte despite his occasional unreasonableness (UCA-Wpg, ABP, Letterbook 4, [Baird] to Mr. Wright, 14 Jun 1893, p. 198).

Baird also noted that he would be meeting with Mr. and Mrs. Whyte in order to discuss the conditions at the school.

Matters did not improve. Wright alleged that when talking to people on the reserve, Whyte was in the habit of blaming any problems at the school on his staff, and thus the staff had little confidence in Whyte. Harmony was not possible, Wright contended, when

he experienced interference six times a day (UCA-Wpg, ABP, F 267-269, W. J. Wright to Prof. Baird, 20 Jun 1893). The FMC decided to grant Whyte a second chance with a new staff and thus, three staff members were transferred to other locations (UCA-Wpg, ABP, Letterbook 4, [Baird] to Miss E. M. Armstrong, 30 Oct 1893, pp. 266-267).

Staff relations were restored with the arrival of the new employees. The new teacher expressed her pleasurable introduction to the Whytes:

At Crowstand I have found very warm and kind friends in Mr. and Mrs. Whyte. Mrs. Whyte keeps such a motherly eye on Miss Scott and me that it is never necessary for us to make her acquainted with the fact that we are feeling tired or sick, as she always sees it for herself. There are discouragements as well as encouragements connected with our labours here, but we share them with each other, and are all happy and hopeful (MLL, WFMS, WD, PCC, July 1894, Vol. 11 No. 3, letter by Miss Gillespie, dated 30 Apr 1894, p. 73).

When on friendly terms, staff was able to encourage one another and provide a support network.

In February 1895, Mr. Whyte was having problems with the matron, Flora Henderson, and he asked the FMC to recall her: "I have come to the conclusion that it is hopeless to expect sympathetic and pleasant relations between Miss Henderson and the rest of the staff" (UCA-Wpg, ABP, F 1034-1038, C. W. Whyte to Prof. Baird, 22 Mar 1895).

Henderson often complained about her duties, believing that she was given more than her share, and accused others of shirking their responsibilities. Whyte had asked Henderson to resign, but she refused to. Miss Henderson wrote Baird in order to share her side of the story. She maintained that she had never spoken crossly to any of the staff and that she felt that she got along amicably with the teacher and assistant matron. John Whyte, on the other hand, had spoken to her harshly a few times and C. W. Whyte was at times

unreasonable and unkind (UCA-Wpg, ABP, F 1066-1068, Flora Henderson to Rev. Baird, 18 Apr 1895).

Pressure for Henderson to resign continued, not only from the principal, but also from other staff and the FMC. The teacher, Kate Gillespie, for example, argued that while Henderson was not overly antagonistic, she had “never exerted herself in any way to be agreeable or to gain our goodwill” (UCA-Wpg, ABP, F 1169-1180, Kate Gillespie to Prof. Baird, 13 Jun 1895). She added that Henderson’s assertions of unevenly divided work contributed to the tension. The FMC convener was careful not to place all the blame on Miss Henderson: “We are far from believing that the fault is all upon one side - indeed I suppose it never is in such cases - but we regard the harmony of the staff of such an institution as of so much importance that we cannot tolerate any other condition” (UCA-Wpg, ABP, Letterbook 4, Baird to Miss Henderson, 10 May 1895, pp. 542-543). The FMC sent a final request for her resignation, citing continued antagonistic relations with Whyte as a main consideration: “Even if Mr. Whyte had never made any complaint at all there is abundant evidence in your own letters to show that there is not a friendly feeling between yourself and him, and without such friendly feeling it is impossible for missionary work of the right kind to be carried out” (UCA-Wpg, ABP, F 1132, [Baird] to Miss Flora Henderson, 3 Jun 1895). Miss Henderson gave in to the pressure and resigned (UCA-Wpg, ABP, F 1207, Flora Henderson to Prof. Baird, 20 Jun 1895).

In the summer of 1897, Neil Gilmour succeeded C. W. Whyte as the principal of the Crowstand school. On a number of occasions, Gilmour had to try to negotiate a peace between the ladies on staff. In his first year, Marjorie McIlwaine was employed as sewing

instructress and Miss E. C. Carson worked as the matron. There existed differences of opinion in regards to discipline and management between the two, but generally, they were able to maintain harmonious relations (UCA-Wpg, ABP, G 1997-1998, Baird to Mr. Mackay, 20 Oct 1897). As time passed, friendliness transformed into hostility. Gilmour noted how their differences had deteriorated into conflict: "... it is most unsatisfactory having two women, working, one entirely independent of the other. There is too much stiffness as to make it very unpleasant" (UCA-Wpg, ABP, H 157-160, Neil Gilmour to Professor Baird, 2 Dec 1897). Sometimes Carson and McIlwaine were not on speaking terms for two weeks at a time. Gilmour faulted Miss McIlwaine primarily, as she was at times very moody. At her own request, McIlwaine was transferred and Jeanie Gilmour, Neil's cousin, replaced her. In order to eliminate discord caused by divided authority, the position formerly entitled sewing instructress was changed to assistant matron. Therefore, only one woman, the matron, would be the head of the housekeeping department (UCA-Wpg, ABP, H 221-228, C. M. Jeffrey to Rev. Baird, 23 Jan 1898). According to Gilmour, having one woman in charge could create a different kind of problem: "There are so many women who make it disagreeable for those who work with them, and especially for those who work under them, ..." (UCA-Wpg, ABP, H 463-465, Neil Gilmour to Professor Baird, 31 Mar 1898). However, Miss Carson and Miss Gilmour's working relationship was a very congenial one.

When Miss Carson resigned, Neil Gilmour was concerned about her replacement; he did not want someone coming to the school, as Miss McIlwaine did, believing that her duties were set in stone and that she would do only those duties and do them as she

pleased (UCA-Wpg, ABP, H 651-663, Neil Gilmour to Hart, 11 May 1898). He hoped for someone who was more of a team player, who would help out where needed.

Jeanie Gilmour resigned temporarily in 1901. A Miss Wright was hired as the matron, but Neil Gilmour found that, in addition to her lack of suitability for the position, she had a bad temper. Once again, two women on the staff, Miss Wright and Miss Dunbar, were not communicating with one another. Neil Gilmour asked his cousin, Jeanie, if she would return to the school and was relieved when she agreed (UCA, PCC, BFM, MAPMNW, Box 3 File 32, Neil Gilmour to Dr. Mackay, 11 Dec 1901). It was preferable to have employees like Miss Gilmour and Miss Dunbar, working with “no ‘cut and dried’ duties, no hard and fast lines by which they worked” (UCA, PCC, BFM, MAPMNW, Box 3 File 29, Neil Gilmour to Rev. R. P. MacKay, 19 Sep 1901). It even made little difference as to which was given the title of matron and which was given the title of assistant matron: “The difference is only in name, any way, because both seemed equally ready to do anything that needed to be done, and there was no question of who was in authority and who was not” (UCA, PCC, BFM, MAPMNW, Neil Gilmour to Rev. R. P. Mackay, 11 Dec 1901).

In 1903, Neil Gilmour resigned. When the new principal, Rev. W. McWhinney arrived at the school, he was pleased with the existing staff dynamics: “In [Gilmour’s] staff I have found much more cordiality than at Birtle ...” (UCA, PCC, BFM, MAPMNW,, Box 4 File 48, W. McWhinney to Dr. Mackay, 8 Apr 1903). There was no further correspondence regarding staff problems. This might be attributable to the fact that Miss Gilmour and Miss Dunbar both remained at the school for over ten years. They were both familiar with

the work and worked well together. Such cooperation would have gone a long way to preserving peace at the school.

Portage la Prairie School

Throughout the decades examined, there was no mention of any agitation or conflict among staff members in the church or DIA correspondence. In the early years of the Portage school, when the total staff numbered two, those in charge of missionary work were particularly cautious when hiring a new staff member. While not a common practice for most boarding schools, the existing staff member was consulted before someone was hired. When Bessie Walker was transferred to the Regina Industrial School, Annie Fraser was asked if she had any opinion as to who should be hired: "Since you and she must live on very intimate terms we are anxious to consult you on the subject. We have several names on our list but other things being equal we would give preference to some one you know and would like to have with you" (UCA-Wpg, ABP, Letterbook 4, Baird to Miss Fraser, 5 Nov 1892, p. 76).

Rev. Hendry was appointed Portage's principal in 1901. For the majority of his term, his wife, Jean, worked along side him as the matron. As well, for over ten years, Hendry's sister, Mary, held the position of assistant matron. In a history of the Portage school, Murray ([1936]: 98): described the situation as "an agreeable 'family compact.'" He elaborated:

... not only were the members of staff united, but from the beginning of his incumbency [sic] emphasized the unity of the school as a whole. Internal difficulties must not be aired in the public. They must be sympathetic and loyal to each other. If one of the family erred, the error must not be proclaimed - much less magnified. Dirty linen, in short, must be washed at home, not in the community laundry. This principle