

[Judith Windle interviewing Dr. Harold Campbell in 1978]

00:04 Judith Windle: Dr. Campbell, before I ask you about your years on the staff of the

Victoria Normal School, will you tell me something about your life work in education in British Columbia? I understand that it covered some fifty years.

Dr. Harold Campbell: Well, I began teaching in 1910, in the one room rural school in Campbell River. After that I was teacher and principal in Vancouver, Esquimalt and Prince Rupert. During that period I spent three years in the army in England and France. In 1928 I was appointed [Principal?] Provincial Inspector of Schools now called District Superintendent of Schools. This was followed by eleven years on the staff of the Victoria Normal School as Assistant Master, as it was then officially called. For about half of that time, I was also Vice Principal and Director of the Provincial Summer School of Education, operated by the Department of Education. Up to that time, educational courses including normal school, ... were not considered to be ...worthy of university credit toward a degree. I next spent five years as Municipal Inspector of Schools in Victoria, now called District Superintendent, and was then appointed Chief Inspector of Schools and Assistant Superintendent of Education for the province. Later I became Deputy Minister of Education. After my retirement provincially in 1958 I was for three years Superintendent of Schools for the National Defence Department schools in Europe for children in the Canadian NATO Forces.

JW: Dr. Campbell, where did you take your teacher training? Did you attend the Victoria Normal School?

HC: No, Victoria Normal School was not established until about 1915. I attended the Vancouver Normal School under the principalship of Mr. William Burns, B.A. He was the first principal of the first teacher training institution in this province, established in 1901\ . Mr. Burns was the second inspector of schools to be appointed in the province in 1892. The first inspector of schools was a Mr. David Wilson, appointed in 1887. He visited all schools in the province and in 1908 established the Textbook Branch of the Department of Education. For several summers I worked under him, and have always appreciated the influence both he and Mr. Burns had on me as a young person.

JW: If Vancouver Normal School was not established until 1901, how did British Columbia secure its teachers previous to then?

HC: Before I answer your question I think I should say that I'm speaking from off-the-cuff memory and not from any researched study so I may be in error in some respects. Up to 1901, most teachers, particularly high school teachers in British Columbia, were imported, usually from eastern Canada and from Great Britain, though some elementary school teacher training was done in high schools. It is interesting that at that time, teacher training, except possibly in Ontario, was a very hit and miss affair - usually just a few ... lectures in school law and classroom management with possibly a written examination given to graduates of high schools and universities. As a matter of fact, I think, that until high school teacher training was first established in British Columbia, about 1921 or 22, under Dr. George Weir, who was later Minister of Education, any university graduate could secure a B.C. Academic Teaching Certificate by writing a short examination on B.C. school law. In earlier days, all that was needed to secure a high school teaching certificate was a university degree. It was assumed that if you really knew your subject you should be able to teach it. I'm certain that few, if any, of my high school teachers had any teacher training. Many of them were excellent, and much better than some I have since seen who had teacher training.

05:06 JW: It would almost seem that you were doubtful of the values of teacher training.

HC: I'm not at all. My experience in teacher training leads me to believe that some people are naturals for teaching. No amount of training can make others into excellent teachers, but all can be improved by good teacher training. I think this is true in all professions and in all occupations.

JW: You say that the Vancouver Normal School was established in 1901, and Victoria Normal School in 1915\ . Can you tell me anything about how they came to be established?

HC: Not very much. ... I was too young to know much of the Department of Education's thinking in establishing them. I do know from hearsay that both Mr. Burns and Dr. MacLaurin

visited such teacher training institutions as there were in eastern Canada and some in the United States, also that both men were instructed to develop their own ideas of what a good teacher training institution should be. One result of this was that the programs developed in Vancouver and in Victoria were not necessarily similar. They had many common features of course, but each school was at liberty to develop its own program. Both Mr. Burns and Dr. MacLaurin were excellent teachers themselves. Dr. MacLaurin was my math teacher in high school. Both had been inspectors of schools ... for some ... years, and visited all the small one and two room schools. And most importantly, both were highly dedicated with a great sense of their responsibility to turn out as good teachers as possible. As a result, the normal school year was a rigorous one for the students. Not so much academically, because a considerable part of the program consisted in learning how to do things, what to teach, and how to teach it. Great stress was placed ... on the normal school student's attitudes and sense of responsibility, on punctuality, and reliability, and on the student's ability to make himself do promptly what needed to be done. Personal appearance, manners, behaviour were regarded as important. In a word, the teacher should be a model in every way for his students. Such a program did not encourage originality, experimentation or innovation on the part of the young teacher. And the Putnam Weir Educational Survey strongly criticized the normal school for formalism and rigidity in its program.

JW: Dr. Campbell, what do you recall of the staff of the Victoria Normal School during your day?

HC: I have mentioned ... Dr. MacLaurin, the Principal, who had been a high school teacher and Inspector of Schools, and who was responsible, more than anyone else, for formulating the teacher ... training program in the Victoria Normal School. The other major members of the staff, with the exception of a few specialists in music, physical education, etc., were all experienced and successful elementary or high school teachers. Few if any of the normal school staffs of that time had had any post-graduate training in education. A few had master's degrees, but in their subject matter fields, such as history, etc. As a matter of fact, up to that time, the middle twenties, there were no post-graduate studies or degrees in education available in British Columbia. I seem to recall, that about 1926, a Dr. Jenny Benson Wyman, a PhD in Education, from Leland Stanford University, was appointed to the Philosophy Department at UBC. She, I think ... She, I think, gave the first courses in psychology, and tests and measurement. I think I mentioned that about 20 ... 1922, a full year of teacher training was established at UBC for high school teachers. For quite some years, this academic year carried no credit for post-graduate degree, largely because the university offered no post-graduate degrees in education.10:16 JW: Can you tell me something of the teacher training program of Victoria Normal School when you were instructor there, from 1930 to 1941?

HC: ... Well, for its day, ... we certainly ... produced some excellent teachers, ... and I think the program generally was quite good. The courses offered were a combination of the subject matter and ... the subject matter the normal student would later have to teach, and the best method of teaching it. In my subject, arithmetic and English grammar for example, the student ... the student had not studied these since he left grade 8, and his knowledge of them was very fragmentary, and in no cases could he explain to his students why he did what he did. The practice teachings, now learnedly called practicums, was quite different from that given today. Each week during the normal school year, the student was assigned one or two lessons by the critic teacher in the public schools. He spent a half day in the classroom. With the help of the normal school instructor, he prepared his lessons, making out a formal written ... written plan under the headings of subject matter and method. On the day appointed, he took over the class and gave the lesson, and was given a written criticism by the critic teacher or normal school instructor. In the final two weeks of the term, the normal student did continuous teaching in some class.

JW: Dr. Campbell, do you think the teacher training given today is superior of that in your day?

HC: I don't think I'm qualified to answer that question. If I were forced to do so, I would guess that in the most respects, yes. Today's ... students certainly get ... much more training in educational theory and knowledge of educational research, and are better prepared to cope with educational innovation. How qualified they are to evaluate the educational fads and fancies of today, I don't know. It must be remembered, too, that today's teacher training students have had 3 or 4 years of university training, while

yesterday's had only grade 12 or 13 for elementary school teachers, that is, so they have much ... a much richer general educational background. Further, and this is most important, up until the Cameron report, the province had 650 school boards, the most of which were operated ... operated ... most which operated one and occasionally ... two room schools.

JW: During your years at the normal school as an instructor, did you teach only one subject, or did you teach other subjects as well?

HC: No, I taught ... just ... two subjects ... mathematics ... that's a ... arithmetic really, and ... and English grammar. These subjects were Dr. MacLaurin's own subjects, and ... he taught them from the beginning of the normal school, and .... but I took them over from him ... when he ... branched out into ... psychology and ... other subjects ... administration and so on.

JW: The teacher training at the normal school was very personalized, wasn't it? You ... you came in close contact with each of the students.

HC: Oh yes, and they were free to ... come and discuss their problems with you ... Problems in teaching, and even problems in accommodation ... We knew all of the students personally, and ... there were ... comparative[ly?] I think we only had one ... one lecture a week where we spoke to all the students. Everything else was just classroom work.

JW: I...I suppose the student would learn just as much on a one to one basis than they would as a ... as a group under those circumstances.

14:54 HC: Yes ... I think it ... considering the conditions under which these students had to teach in one room schools all by themselves, nobody to help them except ... the visit of the ... the annual visit of the inspector ... the normal school training was designed primarily to meet that kind of situation.

JW: You ... Did you go out very often ... to see the students ... you said you did go out to see the students doing a practice teaching ...

HC: Yeah.

JW: Did you find that ... the first time maybe they were very nervous and then they caught on quickly, or was it something that had to be ... worked at for them?

HC: It all depend on ... depended on the students. Some students ... have a natural aptitude for teaching ... a natural aptitude for adjusting to ... the situation ... Other students had great trouble with it and some of them never did achieve it....

JW: Were they told early in the year that maybe they should ... find something else for a career if they didn't ... they did not measure up?

HC: Yes ... by Christmas time it was customary in a ... in a few cases to tell students that ... you didn't think they had the potential, and ... some of them withdrew but we had no power to dismiss them from school from the normal.

JW: Was Dr. MacLaurin the principal those years that you were there...

HC: Yes ...

JW: All of those years?

HC: ... No ... the latter part ... of my time there ... his vice principal, Dr. Denton, succeeded him, and Dr. MacLaurin went to the Department of Education as Assistant Superintendent of Education.

JW: When Dr. Denton came to be principal, was there any change in the school at all, like more emphasis

on sports, or was the tradition kept on, basically the same?

HC: I don't recall any change in ... procedures or techniques to any extent. Following the ... Putnam Weir report, Dr. MacLaurin had made a number of changes, and introduced a few new courses which he gave himself. ... But ... there was not no change in my time.

JW: Was that when he introduced the psychology course?

HC: Yes, ... they came in after the ... the Putnam Weir report.

JW: That would be a very basic course, wouldn't it?

HC: There ... wasn't too much educational psychology known at that time ... a few general principles of psychology. As a matter of fact, when I went to normal school we had a few lectures in psychology but it was a very elementary ... form of ... of psychology. But that again, it's a ... a...

JW: Yeah ... During ... during the years that you were teaching at normal school, were jobs hard to come by for the teachers who were graduating, or were they much in demand at that point?

HC: ... No we ... passed through a [mere?] four or five years... you see the Depression was about 1930 well that was when I went to normal school ... from then now on for four or five years there was quite a ... a dearth of teaching positions. A good many students didn't go into teaching.

JW: It was used as a stepping stone [inaudible] for something else, wasn't it? When you were invited to teach at the normal school ...

HC: Yeah.

JW: It is always a great honour to be invited ... How did you feel when you were approached?

HC: Well, I ... you're not recording this?

JW: Yes, I am. ...

HC: ... Oh, I ... received this letter from Dr. MacLaurin, inviting me to ... I was inspecting schools ... invited me to come and ... I wrote him back and told him I could tell everything I knew about teaching arithmetic or grammar in ... a half hour ... as a maximum, you see. He wrote back and he said, 'You may be surprised' ... so ...

19:58HC: Oh I enjoyed my time in normal school and I learned a very great deal. It came at a time of life when ... when I needed to ... I think cease being practical and ... and try to master something of the theory of education, which I had developed by myself as a .. as a teacher and a principal you see.

JW: The students you had during those years were fairly young, weren't they?

HC: Most of them were 18, and ... some 20\ . Occasionally, ... an older teacher from somewhere else who wanted to qualify ... and ... had to come ... we used to have somebody I think the oldest we had would be about ... oh maybe 40, 45.

JW: So it was an incredible job that these young people did going out to the ... the far away...

HC: Yes, and having 4 or 5 grades, or 6, sometimes 7 grades in a room, you know?

JW: Did you feel comfortable that you were preparing these students well enough to tackle this job?

HC: Well, we tried to. And ... that's why all of the teachers up to that time in the normal school ... were people who had had ... experience, you see ... and could give the students practical assistance.

JW: This next question is kind of ... far reaching ... it's ... I'm talking about the ... the landscaping of the ... the beautiful grounds in the normal school. Were they almost complete by the time you got there was still a lot of changes ... going on?

HC: Most of it was complete at the time I got there, though at one time there was ... a vegetable garden in the front and Mr. MacLean [McLean?] who was one of the first members of the staff - he taught school gardening ... no, it's pretty much as it is today.

JW: You didn't have those gardens any longer when you were teaching, did you?

HC: No.

JW: It stopped...

HC: No.

JW: Were the jani ... or the ... gardeners and that sent up from ... maybe the the Public Works Department [inaudible]?

HC: It was under the Public Works but we had our own gardeners there who ... who worked ... all the year.

JW: Many of the students have told me, who I've interviewed, have said that ... they spoke with the gardeners and the janitor and they just seemed to be part of the family up there.

HC: Yes, yes, that's true.

JW: Everybody just meshed together so well.

JW: When you were an instructor, and you noticed a very bright student, a very good student, would you encourage them to specialize in ... in the area where they were very good, or will you just encourage them to keep going as a teacher in general?

HC: In my day, there was very very little, if any, specialization ... at all. ... You were trained to teach ... an elementary school, ... you didn't specialize in primary, you didn't special ... in anything ... Specialization is a recent ... comparatively recent thing.

JW: In those days, if a woman got married, that was the end of her career. Did you feel that was fair, since some of the women were very good instructors.

HC: Following the Depression of the 30's, ... it was a general feeling I think, that ... if your husband was working, you ... should not work. That was commonly accepted. It wasn't fair, but ... when I was in Victoria city, ... schoolwork had a rule if a girl got married, she had to resign. Nobody questioned it.

JW: Do you feel that maybe the education system lost some good instructors this way?

HC: Oh, I'm certain of that, yes. I don't see any reason why a woman shouldn't ... work if she is ... outside the home provided that she makes the proper provision for looking after her child for the first five years of his life.

JC: Some women who ... quit during the 30s and 40s ... they managed to get back in later on in their families had grown up, and they were so thankful they went back, they're very happy they did.

25:05

HC: Oh, some of our best teachers were ... Some of our best teachers were women who had had a family and ... and returned to the classroom.

JW: As an inspector, and ... working in education all your life, were you ever asked for any input in this area in ... or was it just kind of a social acceptance that went with education ...

HC: I'm not sure I got your question.

JW: Okay, but with women in the teaching field, I mean, nowadays they can go right in and teach, ... and time off to have a child and then go back teaching. ... Earlier, they just automatically quit, it was an unwritten law almost. ... Did this ever ... attitude ever ... evolve or come out within the education board where you were serving as a, maybe a, say, what do you think of this, should we write this in a contract?

HC: I don't ... recall that ... that the Department of Education ever had any hand in this at all. There were never that I know of, was there a regulation from the Department of Education that teachers must stop if they got married. It ... This was a local schoolboard regulation. And nobody questioned their right to make the regulation, that's the peculiar thing.

JW: It just became a matter of society, almost.

HC: Yeah.

JW: Social norms.

HC: Well, it was true not only in teaching, you know. It was true in ... It was the general feeling on behalf of the ... on the part of the public. If you had a husband, you stayed at home ... and ... you couldn't get a job in ... in many places if you were ... if you were married and had a husband, cause jobs were scarce.

JW: There was a ... a woman who was hired by the government to go and check on the different little one room classrooms.

HC: Miss Lottie Bowron was appointed ... by the Conservative government ... which came in about 1928 or so, and ... Her job was to go around and ... visit the ... the ... inspect the living quarters under which the ... where the young teachers ... were forced to live, and try to do something about it. ... I took her round when I was Inspector of School, I took her all through the Cariboo. I would inspect the school, she'd interview the teacher, and ... then she'd go to the teacher's place if there were ... to find out what the problems of young girls were, going into these rural schools.

JW: There was generally more women than men who went into teacher training, wasn't there?

HC: Oh yes, about ... I would say roughly 3 or 4 times as many.

JW: It was difficult to get into the Victoria area, was it, for a ... a new teacher?

HC: During my time in Victoria, it was almost impossible for a graduate of a normal school to get in. They were supposed to go out in the country and get some experience.

JW: I haven't .. I haven't heard of any of the Victoria students getting jobs in Vancouver. Was this ... just automatically thought of as, you know ... Vancouver Normal School would get that area?

HC: No, I don't think the ... even the ... the Vancouver had to have the same problem ... with their own people and there were always plenty of them who'd been teaching a year or two in the few years in the country and ready to come into the city.