The Defence of Identity: Ida Siegel and the Jews of Toronto versus the Assimilation Attempts of the Public School and its Allies, 1900-1920

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L'auteur de ce document met l'accent sur un problème précis des années 1900 à 1920. Le lieu de l'action est la ville de TORONTO. Or, en cette époque, il y eut un conflit qui naquit d'une part de la politique du Ministére de l'Education de la ville et d'autre part du désir et de la volonté de Madame Ida Siegel de contourner les activités missionnaires de Toronto pour conserver l'identité juive de la communauté.

A force d'exemples et de citations, à force d'exposés de situations vécues, les lecteurs pourront constater à quel point les activités missionnaires ont failli mettre en péril tant l'identité des Juifs de Toronto que leur culture propre. Une certaine forme d'antisémitisme s'est même reflété alors que l'auteur de ce document fait par exemple allusion au chant concernant les drapeaux. La Communauté juive qui de 1900 à 1940 constitua le plus vaste groupe d'étrangers à Toronto, oeuvra contre les machinations et pressions assimmilationistes qui couvrirent cette période (1900 à 1920).

Au coeur de ces pressions et machinations une femme: Madame Ida Siegel.

Elle sut anticiper les activités néfastes à la préservation de l'identité juive et, de concert avec les leaders de la communauté, elle sut prendre les mesures nécessaires pour contrer d'une part ces activités missionnaires et d'autrepart certaines activités prises par les professeurs et autres membres de la société torontoise d'alors pour que les Juifs s'insèrent et s'imbriquent dans la société qu'il connaissaient depuis toujours. Seul l'avènement du Multiculturalisme donnera politiquement raison à l'idée de Madame I. Siegel.

Ida Siegel was a woman who was ahead of her time. In the Toronto of the early 1900s Mrs. Siegel, a Jew herself, helped the Jews of the city keep alive their culture, which was being assaulted from almost all aspects of Torontonian society. The widespread belief in Toronto at the time was that the Jews, along with the other segments of the non-British population, had to be assimilated into a British way of life because Torontonians wanted their city to be British. For the Jews, assimilation meant that they would have to discard all aspects of their culture; in particular, they would have to give up Judaism for Protestantism. The public school and Presbyterian missionaries located within the Jewish neighbourhood worked most diligently towards that end. But Mrs. Seigel worked just as diligently toward stopping them; in fact, she worked the hardest when the school and missionaries went after Jewish girls and women. Mrs. Siegel wanted all the people of Toronto to be tolerant of the many different cultures in the city. In essence, she was advocating a policy of multiculturalism. Such a policy, however, was not fashionable at that time: indeed, the school and missionaries conspired to promote assimilation and to stop anyone who stood in their way. Eventually, they even stopped Mrs. Siegel — but only temporarily because she never gave up her belief in the idea of cultural tolerance. Years later, in the 1970s, Torontonians accepted Mrs. Siegel's idea, and multiculturalism became an official policy of governments and, thus, the school. Mrs. Siegel was there to see it.

In terms of the geographic origin of its population, the Toronto of the early 1900s was very much a homogenous city. A great many of the City's citizens owed their direct or indirect ancestral geographic allegiance to England in particular, and the the British Isles in general. Demographic statistics from Canadian censuses for the period bear this finding out. The *1901 Census of Canada*, for example, reported that 141,403[1] Torontonians were of British origin (the *Census* classified all peoples originating from the British Isles as British); with only 4,554[2] listed as having roots in Continental Europe. Twenty years later, the British Isles-Continental European composition of Toronto had not changed much as the following statistics from the *Census of 1921* indicate: 445,230[3] people were categorized as British, and 62,482[4] were listed as being of Continental European descent.

The low numbers of Torontonians who were of Continental European descent coupled with the high numbers of those who were descended from the British Isles helped to instill throughout Toronto a strong sense of affinity with the British Isles. Many Torontonians believed that they shared with the British Islanders not only a common geographic ancestry, but also a common lan-

guage, social pattern, and imperial loyalty.[5] The imperial tie was especially important to Torontonians. Through their membership in the British Empire, Torontonians were able to associate themselves with a great race and culture which was extending itself from the British Isles to encompass its world-wide colonial holdings. Torontonians, therefore, felt that their Canadian nationalism was based upon imperialism — to be a Canadian citizen, one also had to be a British subject.[7] Consequently, Toronto was to be a British city populated by a British-Canadian citizenry which lived within a British cultural milieu.[8]

Yet a British cultural milieu, it was felt, could not endure in Toronto if segments of the population refused to practice a British way of life. Numerous Torontonians who were of British origin were content to live such a lifestyle, but others found it difficult to put aside their native culture. Some such Torontonians belonged to the small heterogeneous groups of Continental Europeans who resided in the St. John's Ward; an area of the City which came to be known simply as the "Ward" . The Ward was a geographically compact neighbourhood that was heavily populated by peoples of Continental European — as well as Asian — origin whom British Torontonians referred to as "foreigners." Since, as the census figures illustrated, the foreign population was small, and because it was concentrated in an easily accessible area, Torontonians who were intent on maintaining the Britishness of their city were confident that they could Canadianize the foreigners, thereby transforming them into British subjects. The idea that the foreigners could be so transformed, so assimilated, was not confined solely to Toronto; it was prevalent throughout English-speaking Canada.[10]

Another idea prevalent throughout English Canada was that the classroom should be used not only as a tool of cultural assimilation, but indeed as the instigator of that learning process.[11] In Toronto, as the following statement from a local newpaper made clear, the classroom of the public school was believed to have been crucial to the development of a sense of citizenship among its students: "The first great aim of every classroom — (if there should be such a thing as a classroom) — from Kindergarten to the University should be citizen-building."[12] The citizenship which the newspaper wanted built with the aid of the classroom was a homogenous one based upon British and Protestant values.[13]

Specific targets of the classroom's citizen-building attempts were the foreigners who encountered in their day or night school classrooms a method of instruction that stressed imperial patriotism, Protestism, the English language, and cleanliness.[14] Much of the literature devoted to the study or the educational system as an instrument of assimilation presented a common thesis: that as-

similative efforts were concentrated on foreign children because it was argued that they, rather than their adult counterparts, could be more easily persuaded into adopting a new culture. Such a thesis was enunciated in a 1970s Toronto Board of Education publication entitled *We Are All Immigrants To This Place* which informed readers that, "Adult foreigners too set in their ways were seen as a lost cause, but the children were regarded as capable of salvation and assimilation."[15]

But the use of night school classes as the medium through which adult foreigners of both sexes were to be assimilated contradicted the child-centered assimilation thesis. In 1900 the principal of the Ward's Elizabeth Street School, Hester How, requested and received approval for the establishment of night school cooking classes, which were to be taught in English, from the Management Committee of the Toronto Board of Education.[16] That same year, the Management Committee granted a group of thirty Rumanians permission to hold night school classes at the Elizabeth Street School.[17] Whether the classes were initiated by educational officials or by the foreigners themselves, Torontonians hoped that in the classes the foreigners would be taught not only the three R's, but also how to become British subjects.[18] Consequently, of particular importance in the classes was the teaching of the English language without which, ". . . British ideals are [were] bound to remain a closed book to foreigners."[19]

Another assimilative value of night school classes was that they served as a means by which Protestantism was introduced to adult foreigners. Several Protestant denominations were involved in missionary work among the foreigners who inhabited the Ward, and they made use of the school system. For instance, in 1912 the Reverend Mr. Winchester was given authorization by the Management Committee to place in the night school classes religious volunteers who would assist the teachers and encourage protestantism.[20]

Efforts at bringing about a change in the religious beliefs of the foreigners was also extended into the day classes. Those classes were attended by children who, separated from their parents, could be made susceptible to the British and Protestant milieu of their classroom.[21] The Protestant milieu of the classroom was extolled by educational authorities from Board of Education members to teachers. Since students could best be influenced by their teachers, the Board of Education was very selective as to whom it hired to fill teaching positions. Jews and Catholics, for example, had a difficult time being hired because all prospective teachers had to endorse in writing that they were members of the Angelican Church; moreover, teaching candidates who were the sons or daughters of ministers were preferred above all others.[22] The prominence given

to protestantism when teachers were hired was — as planned — reflected in the curriculum of the classroom which included morning prayers and Bible study.[23] Students were required to supply their own Bibles or face corporal punishment; a development which placed an added strain on the lives of Jewish children who were already dealing with a supposedly public school system that was determined to Christianize them.[24] Board of Education members also joined in attempts to Christianize the Jews. In 1902 the Chairman of the Board, Marmaduke Rawlinson, supplied the vans needed to take one hundred Jewish children from the Elizabeth Street School to a Christmas Eve church service and dinner where the children received toys and old clothes.[25]

Imperial patriotism also played a vital role in the assimilation of the foreign students. At the Elizabeth Street School a ceremony evolved around the daily homage paid to flag and Empire. Every morning the Canadian flag (then the Union Jack) was raised on the school's outdoor flagpole while students, peering out from open doors, sang "God Save the King".[26] Next, the students would pledge allegiance to the flag and Empire and then sing:

> There are many flags of many lands,
> There are flags of every hue,
> But the dear, dear flag we love the best,
> Is the red, the white, the blue.[27]

The classroom, however, could only have been an effective agent of the assimilation process if its students attended school regularly. In fact, one of the reasons that a free and compulsory school system was created in Toronto in 1871 was to ensure the separation of children from their parents so that assimilation efforts could be maximized.[28] But from the very beginning of the free school the Board of Education had to contend with the attendance problems which hindered the classroom's assimilation duties. The diary of one of the Board's first truant officers, W. C. Wilkinson, who worked within an Irish-Catholic school district supported unquestionably the conclusion that students were kept home by their parents because that was where they were most needed. A typical entry in the diary was as follows: "I found *Mr. Alwand* [student] 72 Seaton of George St. School. His mother told me she kept him home to mind the smaller children but would send him [to school] in the afternoon."[29] So severe did the attendance problems become that the responsibility for the control of truants was placed in the hands of the police department.[30]

A good number of the attendance problems, as the Alwand case demonstrated, were caused by the family's real need of child labour. Still, there were occasions when children were kept out of the public schools so that they could avoid the assimilationist pressures directed at them through the classroom. The Irish

Catholics could send their children to the separate Catholic schools in an effort to avoid the protestantism of the public school: indeed, as early as 1852 Bishop Charbonnel of Toronto worked to offset the protestantization of Catholic students who attended the mixed schools by strengthening Catholic schools through the placement of priests as trustees and superintendents.[31] The Jews, who from 1900 to 1940 were the largest foreign group in Toronto,[32] also worked against the assimilationist pressures directed at them. One of the ways the Jews fought off the assimilation attempts was to deliberately cluster themselves in the Ward where they came to create what one historian of the Jewish experience in Toronto has called a "voluntary ghetto."[33] In the ghetto the Jews developed an economic and cultural infrastructure which helped maintain their Jewish identity: some elements of that infrastructure were theaters, newspapers, mutual aid and fraternal societies, ritual baths, stores which stocked kosher foods, synagogues, and schools.[34] Like the Irish Catholics, the Jews had their own separate religious schools. Two such schools were the Hebrew Free School and the Hebrew Religion School of East Toronto. The two schools must have been disliked by the Board of Education for it refused to render them any voluntary assistance. In 1917 the Hebrew School asked for old desks from the Board's Property Committee and in 1919 the Free School asked to borrow desks — the Committee refused to lend desks, but did agree to sell them at seventy-five cents each.[35]

Thus, in Toronto, the efforts made through the classroom either in the retention or rejection of one's religion and overall culture brought about a segregated educational structure. Within the Jewish community the endeavors made to use the classroom both formally and informally in the struggle to keep alive a Jewish identity also led to segregation — only the segregation was based upon one's sex. In the community, males and females had a separate educational system which they used to maintain their Jewishness.

The development of such an educational system may have had its roots in the sexist thesis that women did not need the same degree of formal education as men did. There does exist evidence which indicated that some Jewish males supported such a point of view. For instance, Mrs. Ida Siegel — who was prominent in organizing clubs in which Jewish girls, young women, and mothers were taught languages, history, and home sciences — remembered that she could not get rooms in synagogues to hold her club meetings because the education of females was not felt to be important.[36] On the other hand, some women also adhered to the thesis by distinguishing between male and female subjects. School trustee Miss. Boulton received approval from the Toronto Board of Education in 1918 for the creation of "Little Mothers Classes" which

were to be taught by nurses and held at least once a week during the winter and early spring.[37]

If not already done so, the separate educational system which serviced females, in this case Jewish females, should be studied in depth because it extended well into adulthood. The formal educational system which the males attended did not. That is a very significant point when discussing the foreign population because the chances of males going beyond an educational level which emphasized more than the three R's was slim. True, the chances of females going beyond such a level or reaching that level were equally slim, if not slimmer. But the females had a separate system to fall back on which operated through the clubs they belonged to. Therefore, foreign females might have been just as, or better, educated than the male members of their families.

A woman who was instrumental in the founding of such clubs was Mrs. Ida Siegel (maiden name Lewis). Although Mrs. Siegel's family had roots in Lithuania, she was an American, having been born in Pittsburgh.[38] In 1893, when Mrs. Siegel was nine years old, her family migrated from Pittsburgh to Toronto.[39] The school she attended in Toronto was Phoebe Street School (later renamed Odgen School) which was located in the exclusive Spadina section of the city.[40] Phoebe Street School had a significant impact on Mrs. Siegel's life: it left her with a good feeling for the usefulness of education, for at that school she was taught not only the three R's, but also an appreciation of nature.[41] Consequently, Mrs. Siegel was quite aware of the immense influence education could have in the shaping of a student's life. Unfortunately, Mrs. Siegel had to leave school when she was thirteen years of age because her mother had become ill and she had to assume more family responsibility; furthermore, her family moved to a less exclusive part of Toronto, the Ward.[42]

Mrs. Siegel's club organizing activities stemmed from her family's involvement in the organizational life of Toronto's Jewish community. Her mother, for example, who had knowledge of the organizational structure of Pittsburgh's Jewish community helped to establish a relief organization called the Toronto Hebrew Ladies' Aid Society.[43] The Society's work was done by women, but the president was a man because the women members did not have the courage to elect a woman to the position.[44] Following her mother's example, in 1903, when she was eighteen years of age, Mrs. Siegel formed a Jewish girls' sewing club.[45] The club held its meetings at Mrs. Siegel's house because she could not find outside facilities; for instance, because the education of Jewish girls was not deemed important, synagogues refused to be of assistance.[46] Finally, in 1904 a Zionist mutual aid society offered the club the use of a store-front meeting hall at the southern end of Elizabeth Street.[47] Using that location as a base,

Mrs. Siegel started a Zionist Sunday School in which the girls were taught Jewish history and religion, and were inspired to present plays on Jewish subjects.[48] But Mrs. Siegel's primary purpose in creating the Sunday school-which came to be called the Zionist Free School — was to keep strong the religious faith of the girls which was being challenged by Presbyterian missionary activities centered in and around the Elizabeth Street School.[49]

Despite the fact that the Elizabeth Street School was a part of the public educational system, it was being used to protestantize the Jewish and other foreign children who comprised its population. That was done with the full consent of Board of Education officials, and with the full cooperation of the school's principal and teachers. After all, Torontonians endorsed the philosophy of the total assimilation of the foreign population so that their city would have one homogeneous culture which included one religion — the Protestant one. Consequently, the principal and teachers at Elizabeth Street took their protestantization duties quite seriously, going so far as to permit a chapel in the school; it was removed in 1903 when the Jews complained to municipal authorities.[50] A few years later, when the Presbyterians founded a mission building in the Ward, they received support from the teachers, who took their students to parties and revival meetings held there.[51] School principal Hester How encouraged her teachers to aid the missionaries, and she was hostile towards people such as Mrs. Siegel who worked against the missionaries.[52]

Presbyterian missionary activity was very intense in the Ward because conversion to pretestantism was believed to be vital if Canada and, therefore, Toronto were to remain British.[53] Accordingly, in 1907 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church authorized its Foreign Mission Committee to undertake a mission of conversion to the Jews of Toronto.[54] The mission in the Ward was begun in 1908, with the missionaries working out of a rented mission building located on Terauley Street.[55] Jews who had been converted to Presbyterianism were the key missionaries because officials felt that they could best attract Jews.[56] Officials of the Church were so enthused over the mission to the Jews that they decided they needed a permanent mission building in the Ward.[57] Working towards that end, in 1910 a lot was purchased at the corner of Elm and Elizabeth Streets, and by 1913 a structure known as the Christian Synagogue was erected there.[58] In the 1920s, however, the composition of the Ward had become so diverse that the name of the Synagogue was changed to All People's Mission.[59]

Nevertheless, during the period in which the Presbyterian missionaries were directing their efforts of conversion substantially at the Jews, it was concluded that success could be had if every aspect of Jewish family life was reached.[60] To

this end, the missionaries offered the following services through the Christian Synagogue: (a) reading rooms which furnished newspapers in English, Hebrew, Yiddish, and German, and which were segregated along male-female lines; (b) night classes for men and women which were taught by voluntary teachers who used the Bible as a text, and Bible prophecy as subject matter; (c) Bible classes and Gospel services; (d) Sunday school for children; (e) open air classes through which the Gospel was preached on the streets; (f) the distribution of Bibles in Hebrew and Yiddish; (g) answering questions about conversion; (h) Mother's Meetings; (i) sewing classes for women and girls; (j) Boys' and Girls' Clubs; (k) Boys' and Girls' Choir Clubs; (h) Boy Scouts; (m) general recreation activities such as summer picnics and camps for mothers and children; (n) fresh air homes; (o) nursery services; (p) visitations to homes, stores, hospitals, and prisons; (q) free dispensary; (r) poor relief; and (s) finding jobs for the unemployed.[61] Of all those services, the medical and social ones were most appreciated by the Jews. [62] In 1911 alone, 3,300 patients were treated at the free dispensary as six doctors and nurses donated their services; furthermore, the doctors made 365 house calls.[63] Poor relief and job searches for the unemployed were also popular.[64]

All of those services were, of course, offered so that the Jews would be more hospitable towards the idea of conversion. But conversion attempts were not too successful: in 1911 just 28 Jews were converted, in 1913 the conversions fell to 17, and in 1915 they rose to 40.[65] During the years of World War One, missionary activity fell off as attention was locked on the war effort, and in the 1920s the population of the Ward was so diversified that missionary activity was no longer directed primarily at the Jews.[66] But prior to the War the missionaries, despite the figures which showed otherwise, were reporting to their superiors that conversion rates were high because there were many "secret" converts who feared to openly profess their new faith.[67] Such statements were probably made to convince church officials to continue funding the mission; it must have been quite expensive to maintain missionaries, a building, and all of those services.

What the conversion figures did show was that the Jews were succeeding in their efforts to fight the missionaries and maintain their Jewish identity. Moreover, the missionary reports made constant references to the obstacles that some Jews placed in their way. For example, they reported that pamphlets were circulated advising Jews to stay away from missionaries, but they went on to report that such opposition only served to advertise their presence in the Ward.[68] Jewish parents and religious leaders were warning children to stay away from the missionaries and the Christian Synagogue, and the missionaries interpreted

such action as a manifestation of "prejudice."[69] Such a manifestation extended itself to the non-missionary community organizations in the Ward. Officials at one such organization, the Central Neighbourhood House, indicated that Jewish and Italian children refused to participate in any of the House's programmes until they were sure that it was not a mission, and until they had their parents' approval to do so.[70]

Each school day, however, the children still had to face the missionaries and their teacher helpers in and around the Elizabeth Street School. The missionaries used the playground which was adjacent to the school as an influence pedalling area. As far as the missionaries and teachers were concerned, one of the great evils among the children which needed correcting was their "uncleanliness" as the following sentence from *We Are All Immigrants To This Place* makes clear: "The schools placed a heavy emphasis on patriotism, Christianity, and cleanliness — the Queen, the Bible, and clean fingernails were the three great symbols of the time."[71] The missionaries would meet the children at the playground and walk them to school where they would proceed to wash the children and their clothes in the school's drinking fountain.[72] At times the teachers also undertook such measures.[73] There can be no doubt that the teachers and missionaries were strong believers in the philosophy that cleanliness is next to Godliness.

But there can also be no doubt that Mrs. Siegel believed that the actions of the teachers and missionaries were wrong. Thus, she continued her fight against the assimilation process through the Jewish Girls sewing club. She had already developed the Zionist Free School from the club. Yet, she was not content, and in 1912 she expanded the club calling it the Jewish Endeavour Sewing School.[74] The School too was located at the Elizabeth Street store-front just north of Queen Street. One of the services the school offered was a library which was to attract girls away from the reading room at the Christian Synagogue.[75] Another project was classes in religion, history, and Zionism which were held after regular school hours, and which were taught by volunteer teachers of East European origin.[76] Jewish mothers also participated in the anti-assimilation efforts. After all, the girls' sewing club had been guided by the Hebrew Ladies' Sewing Circle. At first the Circle's activities as far as children were concerned was directed at teaching the girls how to sew; the finished sewing projects were distributed to the poor.[77] Later, as the missionaries moved into the Ward, the Circle organized programmes such as picnics to Centre Island, which the missionaries had used to attract children.[78]

The important influence which mothers could exert on their daughters and families was not lost to the anti-and pro-assimilation forces. In reports to their

superiors the missionaries expressed confidence in their ability to convert the Jewish family through the mother because Judaism had little to offer her.[79] Mrs. Siegel was no stranger to the influence which a mother could have, but she also realized that she too would have to make use of the Elizabeth Street School as the missionaries did. Therefore, she combined both objectives when she helped convince school authorities that a Mothers' Club where teachers and parents would meet to discuss the welfare of the children was needed at the school.[80] School authorities agreed to the Club because they saw it as an opportunity through which both parents and children could be assimilated.[81] Children, for example, would deliver to their mothers invitations to attend Club meetings which they had written as part of their English lesson, and then they would accompany their mothers to the meetings where they would act as translators.[82] At the Club the mothers were introduced to the Canadian way of life through English language talks on such topics as the court system, child care, and hygiene which were to be given by special guests and the school's teachers and nurse.[83] Mrs. Siegel was not opposed to activities which helped the mothers deal with the new society they lived in; but she did use the Club to suit her own anti-missionary goals by transforming the language of the Club from English to Yiddish, by bringing in guests who spoke Yiddish, and by using certain talks such as those on hygiene as competition for similar discussions held at the Christian Synagogue.[84]

Before the establishment of the Mothers' Club at the Elizabeth Street School, Mrs. Siegel already had in place on Saturday afternoons a reading hour and Jewish Girls' Club. Apparently, she had convinced school officials that such a Club would keep girls who had nothing to do from going into department stores and shoplifting.[85] In reality, however, Mrs. Siegel was using the reading hour and Club as a means of keeping the girls out of the Christian Synagogue.[86]

Board of Education members and school authorities were supportive of the uses of the school to which Mrs. Siegel had professed. The principal of the school, Mrs. Hodgins (in 1913 Hester How had retired, just one year after the school was renamed in her honour), was the honorary president of the Mothers' Club; Mrs. Siegel was the acting president.[87] Members of the Board of Education knew about both the Saturday afternoon activities and Mothers' Club, for the school could not be used for such programmes without the consent of the Property Committee. In fact, in 1918 the Committee ordered that the Club meetings be held in the afternoons rather than evenings so that the coal used to heat the school — which was in short supply because of the War — could be conserved.[88]

In December of 1918 the Board of Education was informed by Chief Inspec-

tor R. H. Cowley that he had received a lengthy letter of protest from the teachers and nurse who were members of the Mothers' Club at Hester How School.[89] What Mrs. Siegel had professed to do and what she was actually doing had come to light. The Inspector reported that the teachers and nurse had resigned from the Club because they had been relegated from a leadership role to one as mothers' helpers.[90] Such a demotion had occurred because the language of the Club had changed from English to Yiddish; a process spurred on by the non-Ward residents (at the time Mrs. Siegel was residing in the Beaches area of the City) who had taken control of the Club.[91] Held up as an example of the predominance of Yiddish was the Club invitations which had gone from being written in English to being written in Yiddish.[92] The Inspector went on to state that the teachers and nurse considered such behavior to be unpatriotic (World War One had recently ended), and he concluded by recommending that English be the only language used in auxillary school programmes.[93]

On 8 January 1919 Inspector Cowley reiterated the information he had on the Mothers' Club dispute to the Management Committee which had jurisdiction over the issue.[94] After hearing the information, Trustee Dr. Noble proposed the following motion: "That one language only — and that the English language — be used in our public schools."[95] Another motion introduced at the meeting read: "That one flag — and that the British flag — be hung in our schools or flown from our school poles."[96] The Jews of Toronto were also responsible for the flag motion — only it was the boys who were causing problems in the school system.

Over twenty boys from the King Edward School had gone on an academic strike on 18 December 1918 because their teacher, Miss Hagarty, had refused to display in their classroom the flag of Zion ("Star of David") alongside the flags of the Empire and allied nations which had fought together in the War.[97] The Jewish boys felt that since Jewish Canadians had also fought in the War, they too deserved to be honoured through a display of their flag.[98] Believing that their cause was just, the boys took their case to Inspector Cowley who called them truants and ordered them back to school; undaunted, the boys appealed to Toronto Mayor Mr. Church only to meet with the same response.[99] The issue was brought to a head on 20 December, the last day of December classes, when Trustees Dr. Caroline Brown and Miss. Constance Boulton met with the boys and — as the *Evening Telegram* described them — a group of "irate parents."[100] Trustees Brown and Boulton were able to diffuse the controversy by offering to place the flag of Zion in the group which housed the flags of Scotland, Ireland, New Zealand, and Australia — the Empire collection.[101] But the solution had a patronizing tone to it; moreover, it was designed

to uphold the authority of the teacher as Dr. Brown's address to the boys and parents illustrates:

> Why we teachers never think of our pupils as Jews or Gentiles. Now I didn't even know you had a flag, and maybe lots of other people didn't either. You bring a nice clean flag and present it to Miss Hagarty and apolozize to her and your principal. Then Miss Boulton and I would like to honor your flag, too, so if you send us each one we will put it up in our homes.[102]

The request for a flag was a shrewd political move by Dr. Brown because an election was upcoming and she and Miss Boulton needed the Jewish vote for reelection.

On 8 January 1919 Jewish boys from Miss Cooper's class at the Victoria Street School also went on strike over the flag question.[103] They also took their case to the Mayor and Chief Inspector, and to the Chairman or the Board of Education.[104] None of the men were in their offices, but spokesmen for all three advised the boys that they were truants.[105]

That evening the Management Committee met and the two motions were introduced. The motion allowing only the British flag in Toronto's public schools was passed unanimously with Brown and Boulton — the election over — voting to suspend the solution they had reached with the boys and parents; apparently, all the Committee's members had asked themselves the same question the *Evening Telegram* had asked, "Is the Union Jack not good enough for the Jewish schoolboys of Toronto?"[106] But before the vote on the motion was taken, Trustees Brown and Boulton received a dressing down from Trustee Dr. Hunter who accused the two of playing politics with the national flag.[107] To that accusation Miss. Boulton replied that she and Doctor Brown had acted as "patriotic citizens" who sought to restore the authority of the teacher "above all things."[108] Mr. Hambly, Chairman of the Board of Education, went to the aid of the two trustees arguing that he was proud of the Jewish Canadians — two of whom were former employees — who fought in the war, therefore, there was no wrong in trying to meet the needs of the Jews; but, he went on to argue, children had to be taught to love only one flag — the Union Jack.[109]

The *Evening Telegram*, the only newpaper of Toronto's four English dailies to report on both the Mothers' Club and flag dispute, agreed with the action taken by the Management Committee on the flag question. In one editorial the *Telegram* argued that the flag of Zion was a religious emblem and as such there was no room for it in the public classroom.[110] Another editorial asserted that the flag of Zion was not a pro-ally flag because, as the flag of all the World's Jews, it was also the flag of the Austro-German Jews who had fought against the Empire in the War — in essence, it was an enemy flag.[111]

During that Management Committee meeting of 8 January Trustee Dr. Noble launched on attack on Mrs. Siegel and her Mothers' Club through an accusation that the use of Yiddish was fostering Bolshevism in the classroom. Dr. Noble urged Committee members to vote in favour of the English only motion because the use of Yiddish was, ". . . just the beginning of Bolshevism in our schools, and we are condoning it by our inaction."[112] School inspector D. D. Moshier supported Dr. Noble's accusation by recounting an investigation he had undertaken at Hester How School during his non-working hours. He had asked several children to count in Yiddish, and he had concluded that they were actually counting in German.[113] Furthermore, Mr. Moshier stated that Mrs. Siegel had told him that Yiddish was seventy percent German.[114]

World War One had just come to an end, and in Toronto anything German and anything which disrupted the social status quo such as Bolshevism were regarded as evil. The City was in the grip of the "Red Scare" which was nurtured by the English daily newpapers' constant reports of a Bolshevik Russia full of murder and starvation.[115] Anyone or anything that was new or advocated new ideas was mistrusted. Accordingly, the wide spread paranoia concerning Bolshevism was complemented by a strong sense of xenophobia. That sense of xenophobia was especially powerful when affixed to the Jews whose counterparts in Europe had been calling for social change before the War.[116]

In such an atmosphere Mrs. Siegel had the great misfortune of being seen as an activist Jew who was associated with the two major evils of the day, things German and things Bolshevik. Nevertheless, Mrs. Siegel did have friends at the Board of Education who were on the Management Committee. One such friend was Trustee Mr. C. A. B. Brown, a former Chairman of the Board, who while not condoning the use of Yiddish, explained that it was needed because there were some members of the Mothers' Club who did not understand English.[118] Miss. Boulton defended Mrs. Siegel's character by describing her as a patriotic, intelligent, and reasonable woman.[119] The two trustees, however, were also defending Mrs. Siegel because they believed — and stated at the Committee meeting — that the foreigners could never be assimilated if they were dealt with an "iron heel."[120] Trustee Mr. Brown then proposed an amendment to the English only motion calling for a delay on its voting until a meeting was held at Hester How between the trustees, teachers and nurse, and Club members; the amendment carried.[121]

The meeting, which Mrs. Siegel had suggested to Mr. Brown and later was spoken of as a trial, took place on 13 January 1919.[122] Restated were the teachers and nurse's grievances with an emphasis placed on the claim that Mrs. Siegel was responsible for replacing English with Yiddish.[123] So upset was the

nurse with Mrs. Siegel's actions at the Mothers' Club that she called for total assimilation of the Jews, "The Jews came to Canada and should be English in every way as soon as they could, and recognize that teachers are superior."[124] Trustee Mr. Brown praised Mrs. Siegel's work, and Mrs. Siegel responded by inviting the teachers and nurse to rejoin the Club.[125] Finally, maintaining that she had been vindicated of the Bolshevik charge by having been given the opportunity to respond to it, Mrs. Siegel resigned her membership in the Club, and was joined by the Club's executive and other members.[126] The Mothers' Club had ceased to exist.

Trustee Dr. Caroline Brown attempted to save the Club by suggesting that a new club, in which English was to be the language used, be established under the auspices of the Home and School Council (a parent-teacher association like organization).[127] The Council had Mothers' Clubs of its own which were based on Mrs. Siegel's Club because she had introduced such clubs to the Council when she joined the Council in 1916.[128] The Council's clubs, however, differed from Mrs. Siegel's Club because they were to be used to help the schools assimilate both the mothers and their children. Consequently, Mrs. Siegel rejected Dr. Brown's suggestion.

In January the Board of Education met to discuss the Mothers' Club dispute, Trustee Dr. Laxton proposed the following motion: "That no language other than the English language be used at any meeting held in our school buildings."[130] Trustee Mrs. Courtice, founder of the Home and School Council and Chairwoman of the Management Committee, cautioned that only a moderate policy toward the foreigners would bring about their assimilation: "I am sorry to hear so many people say 'We got to put our heel down on those foreigners.' That is not the way to assimilate them as Canadians,"[131] Mrs. Courtice and Dr. Brown then introduced a motion — which was passed — allowing Mrs. Siegel to address the Board. Mrs. Siegel stated that Yiddish had only been used at Club meetings for translation purposes; that she did not know that the Board disapproved of outside speakers who spoke Yiddish, even though she translated those speeches into English; and that she was sorry for any harm to the City's Jews her actions may have caused.[132] Then Trustees Mrs. Courtice and Mr. McClelleland introduced an amendment to the English only motion calling for the dispute to be again sent to the Management Committee, but it failed and the English only motion was passed by a vote of nine to four.[133] Both the dispute and the Mothers' Club had been brought to an end. On 29 January the minutes of the Management Committee simply read: "The question of the meeting of the Mothers' Club at Hester How School, was dropped."[134]

Mrs. Siegel has maintained that she was persecuted over her activities at

Hester How School because the teachers, nurse, and missionaries were frightened of her success at fighting assimilation and keeping alive a Jewish identity among the females of the Ward's Jewish community.[135] She was probably correct, but she brought such persecution on herself when she challenged the firmly held belief of many Torontonians that "patriotism, Christianity, and cleanliness" were the ideals which all of the City's citizens had to adhere to. Such adherence was vital because it ensured a British way of life which was deemed to be so essential not only to the survival of Toronto, but also to the survival of the Canadian nation. For as an editorial in *The Globe* newspaper argued: foreigners could not be allowed to use the school system to propagate their own culture, since by so doing Canada would no longer be a nation, it would, instead, become a "polyglot boarding-house."[136]

On the other hand, Mrs. Siegel was advocating a policy of multiculturalism a full forty to fifty years before it was fashionable to do so. Indeed, in the 1930s Mrs. Siegel held office as a school trustee, and she continued to push for policies she knew were not wanted by a society that was intent on assimilating its small foreign population.[137] Mrs. Siegel's policies came into vogue in the 1970s when governments officially recognized multiculturalism as the new human management policy. The post-World War Two era with its large influx of immigrants and the decline of the British Empire brought about a redefinition of what the character of Canada and, therefore, Toronto should be. The Toronto Board of Education was forced into a position of finding someone who had supported multiculturalist policies in the past — it rediscovered Mrs. Siegel. As a result, Mrs. Siegel was invited to attend Board meetings as an honoured guest, and lecture school children on the importance of retaining their native culture.[138] Finally, the times had caught up with Mrs. Siegel.

NOTES

1. Cumulative figure derived from following: Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Fourth Census of Canada, 1901, Vol. I: Population*, "Table XI. Origins of the People," p. 344.
2. Ibid., p. 345.
3. Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Sixth Census of Canada, 1921, Vol. I: Population*, "Table 28. Population of Cities and Towns of 2,5000 and over, classified according to racial origin," p. 542.
4. Cumulative figure derived from the following: *Sixth Census of Canada, Vol. I.*, p. 542.
5. Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies In The Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), pp. 134, 152.
6. Harold Troper, "An Uncertain Past: Reflections on the History of Multiculturalism," *TESL* [Teachers of English as a Second Language] *talk* 10:3 (Summer 1979): 10.
7. Maurice Careless, "Metropolitanism and Nationalism," in *Nationalism In Canada*, ed. Peter Russell (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Company of Canada Ltd., 1966), p. 280; and Berger, *The Sense of Power*, p. 9.
8. Troper, "An Uncertain Past: Reflections on the History of Multiculturalism," p.10; Berger, *The Sense of Power*, p. 52; and Careless, "Metropolitanism and Nationalism," p. 280.
9. During the researching of this paper the majority of primary source material found made reference to Toronto's non-British origin population by the use of words such as "foreign" and "foreigners."
10. Berger, *The Sense of Power*, p. 149.
11. W.L. Morton, "The Historical Phenomenon of Minorities: The Canadian Experience," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 13:3 (1981): 21.
12. Toronto Board of Education, Archives, Newspaper Clippings Scrapbook, 1920, p. 15.
13. Ibid.
14. Toronto Board of Education, *We Are All Immigrants To This Place*, (October 1976), p. 7; and Morton, "The Historical Phenomenon of Minorities: The Canadian Experience," p. 21.
15. *We Are All Immigrants To This Place*, p. 8.
16. Toronto Board of Education, Night School Committee Minutes, 1180-1903, Thursday, 11 October 1900.
17. Toronto Board of Education, Night School Committee Minutes, 1880-1903, Wednesday, 28 November 1900; and Wednesday, 12 December 1900.
18. Toronto Board of Education, Archives, Curriculum-New Canadians File, "1,200 Foreigners In Night Schools," *Toronto Mail and Empire*, 7 November 1929.
19. Toronto Board of Education, Archives, Curriculum — New Canadians File, "Melting Pot Operating in City Schools," *Toronto Telegram*, 17 December 1929.
20. Toronto Board of Education, Management Committee Minutes, 1912, Thursday, 12 September 1912 (typewritten).
21. *We Are All Immigrants To This Place*, p. 26.
22. Ida Siegel, Reminiscences, recorded 31 May 1976, Recorder: Don Nethery, Toronto Board of Education, Archives (cassette tape).
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Stephen A. Speisman, "The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937," 2 Vols., (Ph.D. Thesis: University of Toronto, 1975) 1: 207.
26. Toronto Board of Education, Archives, Hester How School File, "Hester How Carries On Program Laid Down By The Fine Woman Whose Name It Bears," *Toronto Star Weekly*, 9 June 1917.
27. Ibid.
28. *We Are All Immigrants To This Place*, p. 21.
29. W. C. Wilkinson Diaries, Vol. I., 2 Mays 1872-12 September 1872, Toronto, Board of

Education, Archives.

30. Recorded Siegel reminiscences.
31. Murray W. Nicolson, "Ecclesiastical Metropolitanism and the Evolution of the Archdiocese of Toronto," *Histoire Sociale-Social History* 15:29 (May 1979): 145.
32. Cumulative census statistics indicate that the Jews were the largest foreign group in Toronto because they were grouped on the basis of religion rather than nationality. See, *Fourth Census of Canada, 1901, Vol. I.*, p. 345; the *Sixth Census of Canada, 1921, Vol. I.*, p. 542; and Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Eighth Census of Canada, 1941, Vol. IV: Birth Place, Blind and Deaf Mute*, "Table 22. Population By Birthplace, racial origin, and sex for cities 30,000 and over," p. 623.
33. Speisman, "The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937," Vol. I., pp. 121-122.
34. Ibid., p. 122.
35. Toronto Board of Education, Property Committee Meeting Minutes, Thursday, 27 December 1917, col., 341; Thursday, 10 January 1918, col., 14; and Thursday, 31 January 1919, col, 32 (Typewritten).
36. Speisman, "The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937," Vol. I., p. 280.
37. Toronto Board of Education, Minutes of the Board of Education, Thursday, 19 December 1918, p. 249.
38. Speisman, "The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937," Vol. I., pp. 224-226; and *We Are All Immigrants To This Place*, p. 7.
39. Recorded Siegel reminiscences.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Speisman, "The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937," Vol. I., pp. 224-226.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid., p. 280.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., pp. 280-281.
50. Ibid., p. 204.
51. Ibid.
52. Recorded Siegel reminiscences; and Speisman, "The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937," Vol. I., p. 204.

    In her recorded reminiscences, Mrs. Siegel called Hester How, the principal of the Elizabeth Street School, the "worst" kind of missionary who worked diligently towards the assimilation of the children of the Ward. Such a statement contradicts the saint-like status that has been accorded Miss How by the Toronto Board of Education over the years. Indeed, in appreciation of Miss How's work among the children of the ward, the school was renamed in her honour in 1913. Thus, Hester How School was only the third school in the entire British Empire to be named after a woman — the other two were named after British monarchs.
53. Speisman, "The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937," Vol. I., p. 201.
54. "Jewish Mission Work in Canada, 1907-1925," The Presbyterian Church in Canada, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto, p. 1.
55. Ibid.
56. Speisman, "The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937," Vol. I., p. 201.
57. "Jewish Mission Work In Canada, 1907-1925," p. 1.
58. Ibid., pp. 1, 3.
59. Ibid., p. 4.

60. Rev. S. B. Rohold, "Mission To The Jews," The Presbyterian Church in Canada, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto, p. 10.
61. "Jewish Mission Work in Canada, 1907-1925," p. 1; "Mission To The Jews," pp. 10-11; and "Mission To The Jews," First Annual Report, May 1909, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto, pp. 2-8 passim.
62. "Jewish Mission Work in Canada, 1907-1925," p. 2.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid., p. 3.
65. Ibid., pp. 2-3.
66. Ibid., p. 3.
67. "Mission To The Jews," First Annual Report, p. 4.
68. Ibid., p. 6.
69. Ibid., p. 4.
70. Central Neighbourhood House, Newspaper clipping 1911, Notes From Clippings and Early Minutes, SC 5 Box 2, enevelope 5, City Hall Archives, Toronto.
71. *We Are All Immigrants To This Place*, p. 7.
72. Speisman, "The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937," Vol. I., p. 202.
73. Recorded Siegel reminiscences.
74. Speisman, "The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937," Vol. I., p. 238.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid., p. 232.
78. Ibid., p. 233.
79. "Mission To The Jews," First Annual Report, p. 4.
80. Speisman, "The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937," Vol. I., p. 236.
81. "Pot Still Seething," *The Evening Telegram*, 14 January 1919, p. 11.
82. Ibid.
83. Speisman, "The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937," Vol. I., p. 237; and "Pot Still Seething," p. 11.
84. Speisman, "The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937," Vol. I., p. 237; and "Bolshevism In Schools? Idea Riles Trustess," *The Evening Telegram*, 9 January 1919.
85. Speisman, "The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937," Vol. I., p. 236.
86. Speisman, "The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937," Vol. I., p. 236; and *We Are All Immigrants To This Place*, p. 8.
87. Recorded Siegel reminiscences.
88. Toronto Board of Education, Property Committee Meeting Minutes," Thursday, 10 January 1918, col, 1 (Typewritten).
89. Toronto Board of Education, Minutes of the Board of Education, Thursday, 19 December 1918, p. 246.
90. "Must Use English Tongue." *The Evening Telegram*, 21 December 1918, p. 24.
91. "Must Use English Tongue," p. 24: and Recorded Siegel reminiscences.
92. "Must Use English Tongue," p. 24.
93. Ibid.
94. Toronto Board of Education, Management Committee Meeting Minutes, 1919, Wednesday, 8 January 191919, col., 11 (Typewritten).
95. Management Committee Minutes, 8 January 1919, co., 11; and "Bolshevism In Schools? Idea Riles Trustees," p. 20.
96. "Bolshevism In Schools? Idea Riles Trustee," p. 20
97. "School Boys' Strike Ended," *The Evening Telegram*, 21 December 1918, p. 26.
98. Ibid.
99. "School Boys' Strike Ended," p. 26; and "Jewish Flag of Zion," *The Evening Telegram*.

23 December 1918, p. 13.
100. "School Boys' Strike Ended," p. 26.
101. "Jewish Flag of Zion," p. 13.
102. "School Boys' Strike Ended," p. 26.
103. "Is Jewish Flag To Rule," *The Evening Telegram*, 8 January 1919, p. 22.
104. *Ibid.*
105. *Ibid.*
106. *Ibid.*
107. "Bolshevism In Schools? Idea Riles Trustees," p. 20.
108. *Ibid.*
109. *Ibid.*
110. "Public School Is No Place For Religious Emblems, editorial, *The Evening Telegram*, 18 January 1919, p. 12.
111. "The Flag of Zion," editorial, *The Evening Telegram*, 16 January 1919, p. 10.
112. "Bolshevism In Schools? Idea Riles Trustees," p. 20.
113. *Ibid.*
114. "Socialism Is a Worse Curse Than Czarism To Russia," editorial, *The Evening Telegram*, 2 December 1918, p. 8.
115. Speisman, "The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937," Vol. II. p. 549.
116. *Ibid.*
177. Recorded Siegel reminiscences.
118. "Bolshevism In Schools? Idea Riles Trustees," p. 20.
119. *Ibid.*
120. *Ibid.*
121. Management Committee Meeting Minutes, 8 January 1919, col., 11.
122. Recorded Siegel reminiscences.
123. "Pot Is Still Seething," p. 11.
124. *Ibid.*
125. *Ibid.*
126. "Pot Is Still Seething," p. 11; and Recorded Siegel Reminiscences.
127. "Pot Is Still Seething," p. 11.
128. Speisman, "The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937," Vol. I., p. 237.
129. The Toronto Home and School Council Yearbook, June 1930, "Canadian Citizenship Committee, 1928-1930," Toronto Board of Education Archives, Box R 22-5.
130. "'English Only' Is Rule For Students," *The Toronto Daily Star*, 17 January 1919, p. 21.
131. Ibid.
132. "'English Only' Is Rule For Students," p. 21; and Toronto Board of Education, Minutes of the Board of Education, Thursday, 16 January 1919. pp. 16-17.
133. Minutes of the Board of Education, Thursday, 16 January 1919, pp. 16-17.
134. Toronto Board of Education, Management Committee Meeting Minute, 1919, Wednesday, 29 January 1919, col., 72 (Typewritten).
135. Recorded Siegel reminiscences.
136. "Alien Assurance," editorial, *The Globe*, 7 January 1919, p. 6.
137. Recorded Siegel reminiscences.
138. Recorded Siegel reminiscences; and Toronto Board of Education, Archives, Biography "S" file, "Study tells how volunteer, 91, helped Toronto's ethnic pupils," *Toronto Star*, 16 September 1976.