

# The quiet man who built the Metro school system



WILLIAM McCORDIC, retiring this summer after 19 years as education director for the Metro Board of Education, is a firm believer in the virtues of the metropolitan system of government in Toronto. —Star photo by Frank Lennon

By MICHAEL COBDEN  
Star staff writer

William J. McCordic is a super bureaucrat, manager of \$440 million a year in taxpayers' money and head of an empire of 500 schools, 20,000 teachers and 400,000 students.

For 19 years he has steered the Metro Board of Education through a minefield of explosive issues, helped and hindered by armies of politicians and mandarins.

He was top official, with a salary of \$10,000, when the board was established in 1953. He retires at 56 this summer as executive director, with a salary of \$37,500.

The Metro board, which has gained more power than many people think advisable, co-ordinates and arranges financing for all school building and other capital programs in Metro and combines the estimates of the six local boards into one complex budget as big as the budget of many a Third World country.

For all the responsibility that he carries, Bill McCordic is gentle, warm, patient and unassuming. He sits forward at his desk with his hands clasped rather like an understanding family doctor.

Through three hours of interviews—lessons, really, on the history and virtues of Metro's two-tier system of government—his quiet enthusiasm never flagged.

The Metro "exercise" began with the recognition that North York, Scarborough and Etobicoke would not be able to meet their residents' needs, as populations skyrocketed, without a financial transfusion.

The provincial government realized something had to be done, and gave Lorne Cumming, chairman of the Ontario Municipal Board, the job of recommending a solution.

## First loyalty

McCordic got to know Cumming well over the years and, like most other people, thought of him as the father of Metro. But a few months ago he realized Cumming had been wrong on one fundamental issue: He thought the proposed Metro Council—which would look after education as well—should be elected separately rather than being composed, as it is today, of representatives elected locally.

"The success of our Metro system—council and school board—is that the councillors' first loyalty is to their local area," McCordic believes.

The Metro school board was established in 1953. Its job was to achieve a greater degree of fiscal equaliza-

tion among the suburbs and the city, which had a big income from assessments.

The greatest obstacle was everyone's reluctance to surrender local autonomy. And McCordic says, this has remained the major problem ever since.

The provincial government brought in Montreal lawyer H. Carl Goldenberg to conduct a one-man royal commission into the structure of Metro government.

Goldenberg found that McCordic and a few other top officials and research people had been meeting on the subject, and he asked them for a report.

"The education section of the Goldenberg report was written essentially by that group," said McCordic.

The major thrust of the report was to create a more powerful Metro board by introducing the uniform tax rate.

## Textbook solution

The report recommended the Metro board have major control over all school finances and authority to equalize educational opportunities across Metro.

And it proposed an end to the existing system of 20 local school boards, replacing them with 11 boards each representing approximately the same number of people.

"It was a textbook solution," said McCordic, "and it would have worked—no question about it."

"But it wasn't politically acceptable, which happens time and time again when a group of eggheads sit down and try to solve a problem."

Then, in August, 1965, Hollis Beckett, MPP for York East, came up with the idea of dividing Metro into six units, rather than the four cities Goldenberg had proposed.

"Goldenberg's formula was half and half, city versus suburbs, even balance. But with six, Toronto would cease to be the dominant power."

On the day the government announced this, McCordic assembled the top officials of all boards in his office.

"I felt that before we went back and got our trustees all excited we should decide whether the formula was workable. We met for six hours and these fellows said, 'Yeah, we think we can make this work.'"

"I suppose political theorists would regard this as a kind of pretty bureaucratic exercise, and I suppose in a sense it was. We met every week after that for four months without the blessing of our masters,

trying to decide how we could make the formula work.

"Then we got the board's sanction for the group and it has continued to meet ever since. This was an important development because it maintained the idea that the Metro staff included people from all boards."

Later that year McCordic's son Phillip, a former Canadian figure skating champion, died in his bed. His death, which the McCordics' doctor described as a "vascular accident," came without warning.

McCordic's other son David did differently at school. But at university he did well after being told he was material for an honor course, and he did well at law school after realizing what was required was to "give back to the prof. exactly what he would you."

McCordic's daughter Frances is at medical school.

McCordic was born in Toronto, the son of teachers. His father was his teacher and headmaster at the Normal Model School for several years, and then he "shook loose" and went to another school where he "specialized in football."

At University of Toronto he found he wasn't the mathematician his success in that subject at school had led him to believe he was, so he quit and went to teachers' college. He taught for eight years, was a principal for a year, a rural school inspector and a senior official on the East York board before moving to the Metro board.

He is retiring to become executive director, at \$16,000 a year, of the Ontario Association of Education Administrative Officials, a professional body of about 500 top people.

There isn't a person he admires more in "all this education enterprise" than the teachers' leader in salary negotiations with the Metro board last year.

## An historic day

In the previous negotiations, the teachers had pink-listed the whole of Metro, and McCordic anticipated trouble this time. (When a municipality is pink-listed, teachers are forbidden to sign contracts with the school board.)

"We growled at each other for six weeks. Finally we asked them if they were ready to go with us to find out if their salaries were really out of whack with the rest of the work force."

"I'll never forget the day we got back with the data. It was just an historic day."

"Doug Dinsmore, the teachers' leader, got up and said, 'We've met, we went out with you, we've studied

the data. This is the kind of salary scale we want: first off, you don't have to raise the starting salaries at all—they're comparable with anything we discovered."

"But after a fellow's been with you a couple of years, you've got to really jack him up. None of this \$300-a-year bit."

"Then he can slide along for another three or four years. Then he becomes a journeyman. He's an accepted pro and you've got to start paying him dough. He can't continue to crawl up. He's got to go up \$1,000."

"Then he can go along fairly even. Then he comes to what we might consider a career maximum. Beyond that he only goes based on merit, and we'll have to work out a merit scheme."

"I couldn't believe it, it made such good sense. It was a great achievement by a very able, thoughtful, reasonable, strong, gutsy guy."

## Won award

McCordic, who was chairman of the board's negotiating committee, won the teachers' Lamp of Learning award this year. He says it wasn't for his part in those negotiations, but in recognition of the "whole experience."

Over the years he's been glad to see the role of trustees change from "the guy who sort of decided how much we paid for a piece of land and rubber-stamped the appointment of teachers" to people involved in the whole process of education.

But still he would like to see in every school "some forum, some technique for inviting and engendering community interest."

He believes the principal sets the tone of the school and would like to see the community involved in his appointment.

"I don't see them making the decision as to whether it's going to be Smith or Jones, but I do see them saying to the selection committee, 'Listen, we've lived with a rigid, authoritarian guy here and these are some of the things we don't like about him. So let's get somebody who's going to loosen this place up a bit, whose going to take a more favorable attitude towards, say, music and theatre.'"

"Maybe we'll move in the direction where principals—and directors of education—will not have longer than a stated tenure. This will give us more insurance that we have principals who consider as probably their major obligation the establishment of an on-going rapport with their community."

McCordic will be succeeded by A. Grant Gillespie, York borough's director of education since 1966.

# Direct from a dentist—false teeth for only \$150

By MARILYN DUNLOP  
Star staff writer

If all you want for Christmas is some new front teeth, a **denturist** should be able to supply them by then.

Sometime next fall, legislation is expected to pass in the Legislature to permit denturists to deal directly with the public. It will mean people will be able to get a full set of false teeth legally for about \$150.

People can get them for \$180 now from a group of 31 dentists in downtown Toronto who set up the service last month. But most people go to their private dentists, who charge about twice as much.

Currently only dentists can legally take impressions of patients' mouths and fit dentures. Under the proposed legislation, called the Dental Technologists Act, denturists who meet set standards and are licensed, will be allowed to provide those services.

Many of them have been doing it for some time illegally. Ontario dentists have violently opposed them. In the process, dentists have been accused of trying to eliminate competition.

Dr. Kenneth P. Pownall, registrar of the Ontario College of Dental Surgeons, denies the accusations. A survey two years ago found that denture work accounted for only 6 per cent of dentists' practices, he said, and there is far more work to be done than dentists do it.

"Surely dentists have spent enough out of their own pockets—thousands of dollars—on promoting fluoridation programs to prevent tooth decay (and reduce their own potential incomes)—that the public doesn't think they are only interested in money," he said.

Pownall said the dental profession is not against auxiliary dental workers doing more of the work. "At the University of Toronto we have expanded programs for dental hygienists and dental assistants right now."

But, he said, dentists think dental care calls for a team approach—not two independent systems in conflict. Whether it turns out to be that, he said, will depend largely on the final wording of the new legislation.

The new law is apparently designed to assure that the standard of care given by denturists is up to par. Ben Sweet, president of the Ontar-

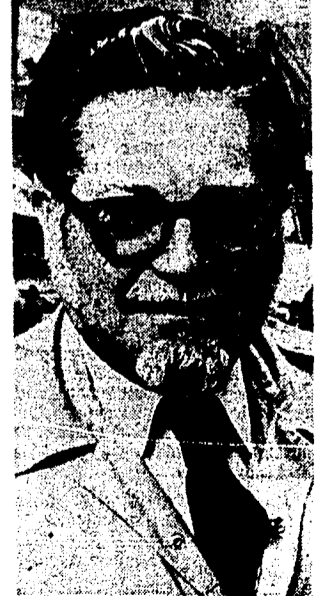
io **Denturists Society**, is pleased with the prospect. He said denturists have been trying to do that on their own. There are some blackmarket denture-makers providing shoddy service—"some we don't approve of." They don't meet **society** standards and haven't passed examinations the **society** has set for its members, Sweet said.

Under the new law, denturists will be called dental technicians. To be licensed they must meet government-set standards and have a certain level of training.

Neither the standards nor the training requirements have yet been spelled out. They will be drawn up by a government-appointed committee not yet named.

Sweet said that for the past six months the denturists' society has been working with Humber Community College to draw up a curriculum to train denturists. He said it would include a short-term course (20 weeks to one year) for working denturists to up-grade them and a two-year course for students.

He said the educational plan will



BEN SWEET  
No price increase

be submitted soon to the health minister and he hoped that at least some of the ideas would be incorporated into the final licensing requirements.

Sweet predicted that increased training would not boost the price denturists charge.

Members of the **society** are prepared to take up-grading training, Sweet said. He estimated the membership at about 200; not all members will eventually deal directly with the public—some will continue to work in dental laboratories making dentures for dentists.

Pownall, however, said many technicians are already being enticed to work directly with the public because the Dental Act, which forbids it, is not being firmly enforced.

"Some technicians have defected to become illegal practitioners—there is more money to be made—and it has left ethical dental laboratories in a chaotic situation," he said.

Because they are short of staff some laboratories are taking three weeks to a month to fill dentists' orders; they used to fill them in half that time.

This situation could get worse over the summer because the legal situation is in limbo. Raids by the Ontario College of Dental Surgeons on illegal denture clinics are expected to stop in view of the potential legalization.

The college has said the raids were in the public interest, but fines handed out to the denturists were too small to shut down the clinics—\$100 for the first conviction, \$250 for the second.

Pownall said it is possible dentists and denturists may ultimately find ways to work together. "If denturists' education is at a proper level. But we don't want a second rate service."

If cheaper teeth are all people want, Pownall said, they can be had for as little as \$30 a set. He suggested some denturists have been using cheap materials. Dentures are a long-term thing, he said.

"They're not something you buy everyday. It's not uncommon to have them last 20 years. They're one of the few man-made things that do last. Now if we could get an overcoat that lasts like that..."



REV. JANOS VICZIAN, the new pastor of First Hungarian Baptist Church on Robert St., was brought here with his wife from Hungary by Canadian Baptists because few ministers speak the language of Metro's ethnic groups. Baptists hope to bring more ministers here from Europe. —Star photo by Doug Griffin

# Canadian Baptists import a minister from Hungary for Metro immigrants

By JANICE DINEEN  
Star staff writer

When Rev. Janos Viczian arrived in Toronto two weeks ago, he became the first minister permitted to leave Hungary and work in a Western country since World War II. Canadian Baptists hope he will be the first of many.

Viczian, 40, was installed last Sunday as pastor of the First Hungarian Baptist Church on Robert St. near College St. The church has been without a minister for over three years.

"Hungarian Baptists like to have a well-educated pastor, married and with a family, but not too large a family," explained Rev. Janos

Laczkovszki, president of the Baptist Union in Hungary, in Toronto to visit Baptist churches in the Metro area.

He said the Toronto church needed a pastor who spoke both English and Hungarian, had several years of theological training, and worked well with youth groups.

Viczian fulfilled all the requirements, but he lived in Bekecsaba, in the southeast part of Hungary. Baptist organizations in Hungary and Canada worked together to arrange for Viczian to spend four or five years in Toronto.

"His stay in Canada is an experiment," said Rev. Sandor Palotay, president of the Council of Hungarian Free Churches, in

Toronto to see Viczian installed in his Canadian church.

Palotay said that if the experiment is a success, the Baptists hope to send other clergymen from behind the Iron Curtain to take over ethnic churches in North America.

Viczian will conduct services in Hungarian for the 70 people in his Toronto congregation. He studied English in Hungary, and his wife and two children will take English lessons this summer.

Viczian and his family will live on Yorkshire Rd. in Scarborough. He said he has not yet had time to assess his reactions to living in Toronto after Bekecsaba, which has a population of 55,000.

"He will have to start a whole

new life here, and evaluate everything in a new perspective," Palotay said.

One change Viczian has noticed is the lack of religious courses in Metro schools. He taught two hours a week of religious instruction in an optional course at a Bekecsaba school.

He said Hungarians have total freedom of worship in the Communist ruled country.

Rev. John V. Hunter of San Francisco, visiting Metro Baptist churches on behalf of the Southern Baptist Convention, said Viczian should feel right at home with his new congregation.

"Baptists are Baptists, all the world over," he said.