C.F. WALKER AND BOX HILL GRAMMAR 1929-1963:

AN UNCONVENTIONAL HEADMASTER AND HIS SCHOOL

RICHARD COTTER.

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Charles Fitzroy Walker (1899-1971) was headmaster of Box Hill Grammar in 1926, and from 1929 until the end of 1963. Located in what was then an outer eastern suburb and controlled by the Methodist church, Box Hill Grammar could well be dismissed as a small and struggling school, important only in the memories of those who knew it and noteworthy because of its head's long reign and its survival before the era of state aid.

This thesis argues that Walker and his school deserve greater recognition. The influence of progressive education, unusual circumstances and Walker's pragmatism produced a style of education which differed from the norm. Box Hill Grammar and its head were unconventional.

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It is in the context of the progressive education movement that meaning is to be found in the terms "unconventional" and "the norm". Lawson and Petersen have described progressive education as "... an unorthodox kind of education concerned with the progress of the child and the progress of society." "Such progress," they add, "is helped by an emphasis on experience that is meaningful to the child, self-directed activity and freedom coupled with shared responsibility". Connell's definition is similar: "... the education that was called progressive, tended: in content to emphasize the nature of current society and the needs


of the society and the individual within it; in method to involve each individual in problem-solving and actual experiencing; and, in organization to foster self-government and community living.

Such an approach stood in marked contrast to the traditional English public school education at the end of the nineteenth century which was based on a concept of the child as "an imperfect adult, a crude substance, a rudimentary machine" and which was characterized, so the progressives believed, by military-type discipline, narrow intellectualism based on the classics, impersonal relations between teachers and pupils, dreary teaching and a passion for games and athletics.

The ideas contained in the term "progressive education" were most influential between the closing years of the nineteenth century and the middle of this century, but the ideals can be traced back to Rousseau's *Emile* (1762). Rousseau believed that by nature the child was good rather than wicked or depraved. From this position it followed that emphasis in education (especially in the early years) should be on the child's natural activity and discovery and that the teacher's role was to select the setting in which the child would learn rather than give constant didactic instruction. Froebel (1783-1852) and Fourier (1772-1837) extended much of Rousseau's thought. Froebel, father of the kindergarten movement, believed that young children should be understood and nurtured rather like plants - "is it ... to be supposed... that in the human child, the capacity, the talent for becoming a whole being is contained less than in the acorn is contained the capacity


5. Ibid., pp. 11-12.
to become a strong vigorous oak?\(^6\). Fourier, a French utopian socialist, is significant for two reasons. He believed that mankind's problems lay in the way society was organized, proposing the creation of "phalanges" which were to be withdrawn communities rather like the Israeli kibbutzim, where children were to be raised as members of the group. Secondly, he placed great stress on activity methods in education. The children would tend plants, grow vegetables and help in the kitchens and workshops.\(^7\) Andrew Jackson, an American influenced by Fourier, founded Progressive Lyceums (similar to Sunday schools) during the Civil War to spread his spiritualist movement. These Lyceums were notable for their unconventional methods where pupils initiated activities and for the importance they attached to physical activity.\(^8\)

By the end of the nineteenth century basic features of progressive education had emerged on both sides of the Atlantic. New ideas were added in this century. The Italian doctor of medicine, Maria Montessori (1870-1952) developed a new type of education as a result of working with retarded children and in the slums of Rome. Adults, she suggested, too often regarded children as dependent on adults - children could be set free by providing a stimulating environment.\(^9\) Georg Kerschensteiner (1854-1932), educational administrator and later Professor of Education at the University of Munich, stressed that the concern of education lay less with individual freedom than with the welfare of society. "The aim of education," he wrote, "is to produce a society, consisting, as far as possible, of persons characterized by independence of

\(^6\) Quoted in Ibid., p. 14.

\(^7\) Ibid., pp. 15-18.

\(^8\) Ibid, p. 19.

mind, harmonious development, and freedom of action which springs from high principles."  

Ovide Decroly (1871-1932), a Belgian physician, began his school called the Hermitage in 1907 on the outskirts of Brussels. He identified four centres of interest: shelter, food, protection from enemies, and creative activities and each was studied in three phases, observation, association and expression. In effect, Decroly's work demonstrated that the traditional classroom and teacher direction was not necessary for effective education to take place.

The main figure in the progressive education movement in the twentieth century was the American philosopher, John Dewey (1859-1952). Through works such as My Pedagogic Creed, How We Think and, more particularly, Democracy and Education, Dewey set out his educational ideas which found expression in his Laboratory School established at the University of Chicago between 1896 and 1903. It is quite impossible in this brief survey of progressive educators to do justice to Dewey's ideas. He believed that the twentieth century with its challenges of industrial society, scientific method, evolutionary thought and the spread of democracy, could only be met in the schools by an emphasis on experience, self-directed activity, problem solving, shared responsibility and changes in subject and school organization. In terms of this thesis, which partly explores Walker's relationship to the progressive education movement, it is most appropriate to focus on Dewey's comparison of progressive schools with traditional schools. In 1933 he pointed to the greater attention paid by progressive schools to individual needs, to their greater use of expressive activities and to the unusual degree of

10. quoted in Ibid., p. 142.
11. Lawson, M.D. and Petersen, R.C., op. cit., p. 68.
13. Ibid.
co-operation between pupils and between pupils and teachers. 14 Five years later, Dewey confirmed the differences: "to imposition from above is opposed expression and cultivation of individuality; to external discipline is opposed free activity; to learning from texts and teachers, learning through experience; to acquisition of isolated skills and techniques by drill, is opposed acquisition of them as means of attaining ends which make direct vital appeal; to preparation for a more or less remote future is opposed making the most of the opportunities of the present life; to static aims and materials is opposed acquaintance with a changing world". 15

In 1921 the New Education Fellowship (which became the World Education Fellowship in 1966) was created following an international conference at Calais organized by the educational fraternity within the Theosophical Society. 16 The N.E.F. was designed to promote progressive education and peace: "through education it is possible to create a different attitude towards life and thus establish better social relationships". 17 The N.E.F. helped publicize, through its New Era, the three main features of progressive education in the inter-war years. In the first place exploration continued, seeking ways of fostering individuality through improved content of the curriculum and methods of teaching. This involved, for example, experiments with art, creative dancing and literature and use of the Dalton and Winnetka plans and project work in the classroom. Secondly, interest was heightened by the rise of Hitler in Germany in the relationship between education and democracy. Teaching social studies and current affairs and pupil participation in the government of schools gained a new emphasis. Finally, interest

in the nature of the child was heightened by attempts by educators such as Susan Isaacs and A.S. Neill to apply contemporary psychology to schooling.\textsuperscript{18}

In 1968, R.C. Petersen made an important contribution to the history of education in this country by identifying and analysing the characteristics of a number of progressive or experimental schools in Australia in the first part of this century.\textsuperscript{19} Included in Petersen's study was a handful of schools in or near Melbourne. Between 1921 and 1933, St. Andrew's at Kew was operated by John Lawton, a Presbyterian minister influenced by Homer Lane's work with delinquents in England. Lawton was interested in social reform, the "reconstruction of society to bring about peace, brotherhood and altruism".\textsuperscript{20}

The Preshil School at Hawthorn started in 1932 under Margaret Lyttle as a junior section of St. Andrew's. Lyttle was influenced by Froebel and Montessori: in 1940 Preshil's prospectus stressed that "we believe that ... the children are not subject to any rules or laws but what they make themselves".\textsuperscript{21} Clive and Janet Nield ran Koornong at Warrandyte between 1939 and 1946 making use of psychoanalytical insights, and were particularly influenced by A.S. Neill's Summerhill.\textsuperscript{22} Between 1935 and 1955 Dorothy Ross was headmistress of Melbourne Church of England Girls' Grammar School, noted for its promotion of self-government and alternative non-academic course.\textsuperscript{23} The common thread

\textsuperscript{18} Connell, W.F., \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 273-286.
\textsuperscript{19} Petersen, R.C., \textit{op. cit.}, passim.
\textsuperscript{21} Petersen, R.C., \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 188-195.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., pp. 305-328; see also Neild, J.C. "Koornong School, Warrandyte, Victoria: a demonstration of an Australian educational system" \textit{New Horizons} 1,7, Autumn, 1940 and Neild, J.C. "Educational Relations and Emotional Development" M.Ed. Thesis, University of Sydney, 1957.
\textsuperscript{23} Petersen, R.C., \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 360-367. See also Lloyd G., "New Education in Practice" \textit{New Horizons in Education} 34, (Spring 1965), Cunningham, K.S. and Ross, D.J., \textit{An Australian School at Work} (Melbourne, 1968).
which linked these and other schools discussed in Petersen's thesis was a rejection of the traditionally accepted understanding of child nature as dependent. The men and women who ran progressive schools "took as...{their}...premise an unconventional concept of child nature, derived from this a set of procedural principles, and then cast about to find an organization, a curriculum, and methods, which best conformed with these principles".  

What was the place of Walker and his Box Hill Grammar within the context of this progressive education movement? Several observations can be made. In the first place, there is no doubt that much of what happened at Walker's school appears progressive. Co-education was introduced, competition was abandoned and extra-curricular activities ranged from camps and concert tours to repair and maintenance of the buildings, tending vegetable gardens and helping in the operation of the school's dairy. Walker was interested in the idea of the school as a large family which would provide comfort and promote co-operative rather than individualistic and competitive conduct. Secondly, it must be emphasized that at no time did Walker develop a coherent educational base upon which these and other features of the school rested. It is possible that co-education and the relaxed atmosphere of the school had their origins in educational theory, but for the most part Walker's school was a reflection of his personality and responses to the very real difficulties he encountered. Because of this, Box Hill Grammar cannot be described as a progressive school; rather, as this thesis argues, it was unusual. Walker was a pragmatist rather than a theoretician: it is more than likely that his grasp of the ideas of progressive education, despite his extensive reading,

24. Petersen, R.C., op. cit., p. 5.
was limited. In the third place, it must be recognized that pro-
gressive ideas filtered upwards from primary schools, where they had
their greatest impact, to the secondary level so that many so-called
traditional schools during the period under review ceased to be char-
acterized in the terms described on page two. Even though there was
a narrowing of the gap between progressive and traditional schools
because of this process and by force of example, Box Hill Grammar
remained unusual, its sympathies and characteristics were, as follow-
ing chapters suggest, more unconventional than conservative schools
would allow or accept. Finally, it is to be expected that readers'
reactions to Walker and Box Hill Grammar will be varied. On the one
hand - for this thesis has a strong personal dimension and does not
wish to avoid an examination of Walker's beliefs, idiosyncracies,
ambitions, flaws, strengths, successes and ultimate failure in order
to understand the sort of man he was - there is much to admire in
the man's tenacity. On the other hand we cannot avoid the conclusion
that the school was academically mediocre, especially from the early
fifties onwards. It is true that Walker had problems at times with
the quality of his teaching staff and evidence suggests that his cli-
entele included boys and girls from unhappy family backgrounds or
with learning difficulties. Walker's neglect of the scholastic side
of his school in favour of non-academic pursuits was more significantly
the result of his misunderstanding of the best of progressive educa-
tion. In attaching too little importance to systematic learning, it
is clear that Walker did not understand that judgement must be based
on knowledge.

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Much of this thesis is based on oral testimony. This was unavoidable
since Walker was not a collector of documents in any methodical way. At the same time, the technique of interviewing students, staff, council members and others with knowledge of events and daily routines was appropriate since it provided insights not normally contained in official papers or records. Some sixty people were interviewed. The author was directed to ten people by members of the Walker family, but was aware that this might produce information sympathetic to Walker and his work. In order to gain a more balanced view the author spoke to thirty ex-students, their names chosen at random from the school's roll book. The remaining interviewees either approached the author or were judged by him as significant as research proceeded.

The use of oral testimony poses particular methodological difficulties especially since the strongest single impression gained through interviews was the goodwill towards Walker. The author adopted two approaches. Recollections of facts were verified as far as possible by cross-checking with documentary sources or with similar memories of the same event. Opinions or impressions presented a greater difficulty. The approach here was to exclude unsupported information of this sort, include material accompanied by details on the informant and to comment, where necessary, giving the author's opinion of the reliability of the testimony.

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It now remains to meet the school and Walker and to consider some of the assets and liabilities he brought to his position as headmaster. Walker's uninterrupted relationship with Box Hill Grammar comprises
the third part of its history. The first part began in 1890 with
the arrival of Arthur Robert Stephenson to the district and ended
with his departure in 1918. Stephenson was an optimist, opening
the doors of his New College in Rose Street, Box Hill, against the
advice of his friends who looked at the open spaces, the orchards
and brickworks and declared the place to be on the outskirts of civil-
ization. But Stephenson had what passed uneasily as a system of
education on his side: it was not until the early years of this cen-
tury that the state government, with its creation of the Melbourne
Continuation school in 1905, began to expand its interest beyond educa-
tion of the most elementary sort.

It is not the intention here to consider the rhythms of daily life
at New College, rather we must isolate those characteristics which
Walker inherited. Although privately owned, New College (which was
renamed Box Hill Grammar in 1918) was closely associated with the
local religious fraternity. Stephenson, later ordained as a Con-
gregationalist minister, played an important role as lay preacher
and trustee of the Methodist church and two headmasters who followed
him, Charles Henry Zercho and Evelyn Holdsworth Strugnell, were Ang-
lian clerics.

Although the school was small - never more than 100 pupils including boarders - it was considered as a valuable comm-
unity asset by church going folk and those who valued private second-
ary education, especially when access to larger and more prestigious

p. 2; Box Hill Reporter 10 January, 1919. On Stephenson and New College see
versity, 1982.


27. Blake, L.J., (ed.), Vision and Realization: A Centenary History of State Edu-

28. Box Hill Reporter, 13 January, 1922; note on "Form for Application for the
Registration of a School", 9 June, 1927, Closed Schools' Files, Box 3 (held
at Public Record Office, Laverton).
church schools was possible only by means of time-consuming travel on the train which linked Box Hill with the city. Of all denominations, the Methodists were the most vigorous, an assertion supported by their successful campaign to keep the district free of hotels in 1920.

It should also be noted that the government's entry into secondary education involved the irritations of inspection and registration and promised a future (averted until the establishment of Box Hill High School in 1930) of competition with a rival at least the equal of the existing church schools closer to Melbourne.

The second stage of the school's history began with the departure of Stephenson and was marked by conflict as Box Hill Grammar struggled to survive. The new head, Boyd Gravenall, was a man of undoubted sporting achievements - he had been an outstanding athlete at Wesley and played league football - but he was financially imprudent, a characteristic he shared with Zercho who replaced him in 1923. Even so, parents, and men like Dr. W. Craig, E.W. Greenwood from the Methodist church and J.E. Russell, a local businessman, who were interested in the school's welfare, remained convinced that despite the school's growing reputation for not paying its debts, it was possible for a growing and prosperous area to support a non-government school and make it succeed. Walker replaced Zercho as head in 1926 and stayed

29. Reporter, 17 December, 1920, has 90 on the roll.
33. Greenwood was M.L.A. for Nunawading, Reporter, 15 February, 1924; Craig and Russell were president and secretary (respectively) of the B.H.G.S. Council, Reporter, 21 December, 1928.
only one year before accepting a position as a car salesman with Cheney Motors. He later wrote that "if I had known the internal discord which had occurred at the school previous to my appointment, I would never have taken the job at all." 34

The appointment of Strugnell brought no end to the discord and by 1928, Box Hill Grammar was on the point of collapse. Again there were rumours of financial incompetence which further damaged the school's reputation, the roll stood at 30, the Public Health Department threatened to close the school unless a number of defects dating back to 1890 were remedied, and the Box Hill Council had offered the Education Department a four acre site on the corners of Middleborough and Whitehorse Roads in order to attract a high school to the area. 35

In August, 1928, Walker was approached by a representative of the school's council and asked whether he would consider returning as headmaster. 36 Walker's honest management of the school in 1926 - locals remember it as the only time in the decade that tradesmen and suppliers received full payment on their invoices - and his Methodism were important ingredients in a plan to rescue Box Hill Grammar. Strugnell was to go, Walker was to be reinstated, the school was to be offered to the Methodist church and a new site was to be found.

The plan succeeded: in 1929 the Methodist Board of Education took over the responsibility for the school, Walker became headmaster, and consideration was given to the task of finding a new site for the school in Station Street.

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35. Reporter, 21 December, 1928; letter of J.E. Russell to Secretary, Public Health Department, 3 January, 1929, Closed Schools' Files: Lenon, A., op. cit., p. 159.

Walker was brought up in an atmosphere which stressed the importance of family relationships. He was particularly proud of his family's origins and family spirit. Amos, his great grandfather, was a blacksmith who came from Leeds to Melbourne in 1840. He set up his forge on what is now the site of the General Post Office in Bourke Street, later moving to Collingwood. Amos's son, Henry, continued the family tradition at Port Albert, when, in 1870, he established his own forge to shoe pack-horses brought by sea to carry goods overland to the booming gold-mining township of Walhalla. When yields at Walhalla declined, Henry transferred operations to Heyfield. Ten years later, in 1885, the Walker family returned to Melbourne. Henry's son, also named Henry, married and eventually settled at Mitcham.

Walker learned, as a boy and young man, the importance of family ties and the dignity of labour, and both lessons, as we shall see, influenced the nature of his school. He grew to be a strong lad, well able to "deliver a pretty good bump... to other ruckmen and shake their brains a bit". In later life, a fondness for food produced a large man with a commanding presence, but there was still a remarkable capacity for hard work. Nor was he afraid of study.

Walker's earlier education at state primary schools was promising enough to justify his father sending him to Melbourne High in 1914 and 1915. He had then trained as a pupil teacher, accepting a position at Scotch College in 1918. Walker continued to study at night: he took a Degree

38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., 20 April, 1971.
in Arts from the University of Melbourne in 1923, a Diploma of Education in 1924, and completed his Master's thesis in 1930. He was a competent rather than gifted scholar - he had to repeat two University subjects in his first degree - but he had, by way of compensation, a broad spread of knowledge: practical things from the blacksmith days which were, as we shall see, to be of considerable advantage, and a school master's command of Mathematics, French, History and Literature. His greatest love was literature - his thesis was "The Bible as Literature", and Coleridge, Wordsworth and Tolstoy were particular favourites. Much of his other reading over the years that followed was professional. A.S. Neill and Homer Lane shared his library shelves with books on Methodism and Bertrand Russell.

As headmaster, Walker readily assumed the role as leader of Box Hill Grammar. Known universally as the "Boss", he was seen, particularly by his staff and students in the thirties and the forties, as able to initiate educational reforms. His style was charismatic, he was by nature dictatorial and his physical size and strength gave an added edge to a quick temper. He was not an able administrator. Although prepared to work long hours and pleased at being at the centre of


42. Transcript from Students' Records Office, University of Melbourne.


45. Interviews with Michael Norman who described Walker as administratively "unique", and Revs. Lechte and Allardice who stressed Walker's "administrative weaknesses". Norman was Walker's successor and admired his predecessor greatly; Lechte and Allardice sought interviews with the author.
things, his decisions were often intuitive, justified by later reading or by observation of their benefits. No-one was consulted and Walker preferred to hold as few staff meetings as possible. Yet Walker relied heavily on others (particularly his wife, Ethel, whom he married in 1922, and his long-serving senior master, Rupert Brunning) to put his schemes into practice and most of these schemes involved giving his pupils a greater degree of freedom than that enjoyed at other schools. Those who sought to understand the man looked to his origins. Walker came from a devout and respectable background. Though he loved his father's compassion and warmth, Walker was closer in temperament to his mother who was known to be strong-willed and unpredictable. Walker's personal effort to lift himself out of the blacksmith's shop were successful, but he had so little free time that fellowship with others, which may have smoothed his excesses, was limited and his social development was neglected. Walker was, in a word, raw. A stranger to diplomacy, he was susceptible to flattery, congratulating in a rather childlike way those who liked or admired him for their good judgement. At the same time he was readily persuaded of the rectitude of his own position. As headmaster of Box Hill Grammar, Walker's strengths and weaknesses were tested and stretched to their limits.

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Walker's retirement ushered in the fourth stage of the school's history which has been characterized by a more conventional educational philosophy and physical growth. What Walker thought of these changes is uncertain, though he would perhaps have been forgiven a feeling of resentment as money flowed into the school through appeals and government assistance. He chose to turn his back on a 36 year re-

46. Interview with Evan Walker, Ann Walker and Jean Provan.
lationship: indeed, his diary contains only one reference to the school — it was "lovely to hear the children shout together at play". Walker's last years were active. He sold letterboxes and precision instruments and was busy with the affairs of the United Nations and calendar reform. For their part, the school authorities seemed content to ignore the man's contribution. It was not until three years after his death that the school belatedly acknowledged its debt when it opened the C.F. Walker centre, a co-educational senior college dedicated to the man "whose vision and enthusiasm inspired the Methodist church to establish this school and who gave his life to its development and progress".

48. Interview with Evan Walker.
49. Memorial plaque, Kingswood College, which, incidentally, has Walker as headmaster for 34 years. He was headmaster of B.H.G.S. for a total of 36 years: one year when the school was privately owned, 35 years when it was operated by the Methodist church, 34 years when it was situated at Station Street.
CHAPTER TWO

UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES

This chapter explores the circumstances which affected the operation of Box Hill Grammar from 1929 to 1964. Four characteristics - the nature and quality of the school's students, appointments to the teaching staff, financial difficulties and Walker's disputes with his governing authorities - will be examined. When combined with Walker's personality and understanding of progressive ideas, they were factors which produced unconventional responses. The nature of these responses will be indicated where relevant, but examined in greater detail in following chapters.

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Walker's roll book is the only surviving "official" source of information on the composition of the 1,887 pupils who enrolled at Box Hill Grammar between 1929 and 1964. The roll has its deficiencies - occupations of fathers or guardians are listed only to 1949, and the source and destination of students are not given - but it has been possible to supplement this information with public examination results and the recollections of teachers and ex-students. Unfortunately, no comparable study has been made of students over the same period of time at other schools. Ian Hansen's "Nor Free Nor Secular" is a study of six independent schools - Scotch College, Melbourne Grammar, Geelong College, Geelong Grammar, Xavier and Wesley - but its findings relate to the end of the sixties, five years after Walker left Box Hill Grammar. Direct comparisons and conclusions are not possible; nonetheless, strong impressions emerge.

In the first place, Box Hill Grammar was not an elitist school. Using such measures as occupations of parents, *Who's Who in Australia* as a register of prominent people and a social ranking of Melbourne's suburbs, Hansen has demonstrated that the schools in his survey drew their pupils overwhelmingly from privileged backgrounds.² Walker's roll reveals, by way of contrast, a near absence of doctors, lawyers and prominent businessmen. The occupations of parents of the 1936 intake of 42 new students, for example, included five described as civil servants, five rural producers (three orchardists, a grazier and a farmer), four were commercial travellers, three were accountants and three were storekeepers. It is interesting to notice that, amongst the rest, there was a cook, an ironfounder, a bricklayer and a plumber.³ That Box Hill Grammar attracted the patronage of parents who were less affluent than those who sent their children to better-known schools was partly a matter of fees. In 1929, for example, Tintern, an Anglican girls' school, charged tuition fees of £6.6.0 per term for eight year olds, whereas the fees at Walker's school were £3.13.6.⁴ In 1941 the fees at Box Hill Grammar were, on average, 15 per cent lower than those at M.L.C. and they remained at approximately the same percentage difference until the mid-sixties.⁵ No entries in *Who's Who* have been found for parents of Box Hill Grammar's children and only a handful lived in suburbs such as Kew, North Balwyn, Toorak and Hawthorn - most lived in Box Hill, Surrey Hills, Blackburn and Mitcham.

2. Ibid., pp. 257-63.
3. B.H.G.S. Roll. All statistics on B.H.G.S. are taken from this source except when otherwise acknowledged.
Secondly, there are other indications that Box Hill Grammar's students were less fortunate than those who attended better known private schools. Relying on the memories of former teachers and students, it would appear that the school had a number of children with emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties sent by parents or institutions like the Tally Ho Village operated by the Methodist church, who hoped that time spent at Walker's school would be beneficial.\footnote{Interviews with John and Anna Alexander (John was a student 1931-41 and a member of the school council 1958-64; Anna taught at B.H.G.S. 1946-48), Bill Secombe (teacher 1936-41), Jean Provan (daughter of C.F. Walker).} It has been impossible to measure the size of this group but we do know that in the primary section of a little over 100 in 1951, there was a remedial class of 18 boys and girls.\footnote{Interview with Robert Walker (son of C.F. Walker and a member of this class).} About one-third of the boarders during Walker's 35 years as headmaster came from Melbourne and its suburbs: a common observation of former staff members is that most of these were from broken homes.\footnote{Interviews with Bill Secombe, George Wilson.}

Further inferences are possible concerning the quality of the students using retention rates and examination results. Retention rates, used here to mean the length of stay at the school, were poor. Before the war, 55 per cent of day pupils attended Box Hill Grammar for two years or less, but low retention rates were not uncommon during this time of economic hardship and a similar pattern can be seen at Wesley and M.L.C.\footnote{Blainey, G., et al., Wesley College, The First Hundred Years (Melbourne, 1976), pp. 177, 179-80; Zainuddin, A.G. They Dreamt of a School, a Centenary History of Methodist Ladies’ College Kew 1882-1982 (Melbourne, 1982), p. 217.} Nor should implications about the students' capacities be drawn from the high turnover of children during the war as this may be explained by the unsettled condition of the times. But between 1945 and 1963, a time when the general public came to value secondary
education more highly than ever before, 51 per cent of Box Hill Grammar's students did not continue at the school beyond two years.

Why did the children leave? Those who left were about equally divided into two groups: those who looked for employment on reaching the age of 14 and those who transferred to other schools. It is reasonable to assume that the former group included less able students who stayed on to satisfy legal requirements, whereas the latter group included many of Box Hill Grammar's more capable students. The pattern would thus appear to be that classes up to Years 9 or 10 (when most students became 14 years old) had a significant percentage of students waiting to leave and that included in classes beyond Years 9 and 10 were few extremely able boys and girls.

Care must be exercised in interpreting the school's public examination results for the fifties. They are the product of many variables: not least must be included teaching standards. It should also be noted that the total number of candidates presented for the examinations was small - 120 for Intermediate, 67 for Leaving and only 11 for Matriculation - so that the percentage pass rates could have been significantly higher had a handful of students been more successful. During the fifties only 42.5 per cent of Box Hill Grammar's students gained their Intermediate certificates, 69 per cent passed the Leaving examination and 45 per cent were successful at Matriculation. These statistics support the impression, even given the above qualifications, that a significant percentage of Walker's students were not academically gifted.

In the third place, Box Hill Grammar always had a sizeable percentage of boarders, mostly from East Gippsland, the Mallee and from the

areas north of Melbourne. During Walker's period as headmaster boarders averaged 28 per cent of the roll but, as with other schools, there was a considerable variation over time. During the thirties the proportion of boarders to total students fluctuated between 18 per cent in 1935 and 35 per cent in 1937, stabilizing at 24 per cent during the fifties. Not surprisingly, the war increased the boarders' share of the roll to as high as 58 per cent in 1943 as parents, often separated with fathers in the armed forces, sought security for their children. At the same time accommodation at Wesley seemed uncertain as its headmaster, J.H. MacNeil, announced his intention to reduce the size of the house and was obliged by the Army to vacate the site facing St. Kilda Road for part of 1942 and all of 1943.11 Hansen's statistics show that in 1967 his Melbourne schools had only a "token proportion" - less than one-fifth - of boarders, but caution is necessary here because the increase in the number of country high schools during the fifties and sixties reduced the need for boarding houses in the city.12 In 1960, however, only 11 per cent of Wesley's students were boarders and at M.L.C., during the same years as Walker's headmastership, the average figure was 15 per cent. Using Weinberg's criterion, Box Hill Grammar was "mainly boarding" - that is, between one half and two thirds of its roll were boarders - for five years.13 Significantly, these five years occurred during the first fifteen years of Walker's term as headmaster.

Finally, Box Hill Grammar was a school of young students. Mention has been made of the short period of time boys and girls stayed at the school: to this must be added the fact that over the 35 years ending in 1964, the average age at enrolment was 11.7 years. Boarders

13. Ibid., p. 108.
tended for the most part to be about a year older on entry to the school than day students and the same is true of girls. It is also true that pupils in the thirties tended to be a little older than at other times: in 1938, for example, only 4 per cent of the roll was aged 6 or younger, but students in this age group rose to average 21 per cent during the fifties and reached a remarkable 39 per cent in 1962. The presence of a kindergarten and primary section, the reluctance of parents to allow their young children to travel long distances and overcrowding in the state schools were factors which attracted young boys and girls, but it should also be noted that the school's dubious academic record acted as a deterrent, especially at the secondary level. Between 1946 and 1956 Box Hill Grammar had no Matriculation classes and its Leaving classes were small - in 1951 for example, only 11 students attempted the public examinations at the end of the year.\textsuperscript{14} Hansen's survey clearly demonstrates the holding power of his six independent schools - it is "considerable" - and although his statistics relate to 1967 they may be taken to apply to earlier years in the decade given that there were few changes in the numbers over the previous five years. Using Wesley, the only Methodist school in Hansen's study, as a basis for comparison, we find that in the early sixties over 60 per cent of that school's boys were in Years 9 or beyond.\textsuperscript{15} At Box Hill Grammar, the same section of the school contained less than 20 per cent of the total numbers.

How did Walker perceive his role in these circumstances? He did not consider the fact that his students generally came from a less privileged socio-economic background than those who attended better known private schools to be a disadvantage. Indeed, he remarked to his

\textsuperscript{14} Walker, C.F., "School Records".

\textsuperscript{15} Hansen, I.V., op. cit., pp. 78-81.
wife Ethel, and son Evan, that he thought that Box Hill Grammar, with its low fees, was closer in spirit to John Wesley's educational mission amongst the working classes than Melbourne's other Methodist schools. A man of humble origins, who genuinely disliked social pretensions, Walker was at home at Box Hill Grammar.

On a practical level, Walker responded to the small size of his school – there were only 31 pupils in 1929 – with considerable energy. As discussed later, he paid particular attention to the task of attracting boarders from the country. He introduced co-education: opening the school to girls was partly, as we shall see, the result of a conviction of the virtue of mixed education, but it also increased the roll. As his school grew to 118 in 1943, accommodation became a problem. Various agencies of the church donated buildings they no longer required and Walker, with the help of groundsmen and students, had them relocated and pressed into service. No new buildings were erected on the Station Street site between 1930 and 1958 and, as a result, Box Hill Grammar bore a tattered appearance, a visual confirmation of its lowly status amongst private schools.

Perhaps Walker's most interesting reaction examined in detail in a later chapter, was his attempt to cater for what he considered to be non-academic boys and girls. Influenced by Homer Lane's efforts to rehabilitate delinquents in England after the Great War, and captivated by A.S. Neill's work at Summerhill, Walker stressed activities outside the classrooms and tried to develop a relaxed and non-repressive atmosphere at Box Hill Grammar. In some ways he was successful,

17. See pp. 52-56.
18. See pp. 63-64.
20. See pp. 81-95.
but Walker had borrowed ideas from institutions quite unlike his own. In opting for a less academic approach and applying it across the whole school, Walker may have disadvantaged those of his students whose educational aspirations were no different from those of boys and girls at other schools. There is also the possibility that some of his less able students were capable of greater academic success than he allowed: in denying them rigorous schooling, Walker may have inadvertently deprived them of one means of self-improvement.

Walker often found it difficult to attract and retain teachers. At times, his problems were shared by other headmasters. There were general staff shortages due to the war and the fifties was a period of expansion in education so that teachers were in short supply.21 Walker claimed that a teacher's main asset was his or her capacity to relate well to children - "teachers must not do damage to the social life of their pupils; and damage is done by authoritarianism, by insistence on tradition, by allowing snobbish superiority to develop ... Camaraderie between teacher and pupil is a priceless asset".22 Such a view was quite consistent with his opinion, examined in a later chapter, that the school had the characteristics of the family, but it must be doubted that Walker was always able to appoint staff using this criterion.23 Box Hill Grammar was always short of money and staffing was more often than not made on the basis of economy. Mrs. Eileen Fallon, who taught at the school during the thirties, has recalled that negotiations over her salary were protracted and a


23. See chapter four.
colleague, Bill Secombe, left the school in favour of Carey in 1941 due to an offer of more money. During the fifties it was common for supervision of the boarding accommodation to be partly in the hands of former students such as Trevor Boucher, who were given free board in return for exercising such responsibility. In his attempt to reduce the cost of salaries, Walker clearly preferred to employ female teachers. During his 35 year period as headmaster, over 60 per cent of his teaching staff were women.

There are strong memories of some teachers staying at the school only as long as was necessary to realize that Walker's view of education differed from their own. Others found that working conditions were not, for the most part, appealing. There was no reference library apart from Walker's personal collection kept in the main boarding house, readily made available to older students, until 1958. Thirty years earlier, aided by a library levy of one shilling per student, girls at M.L.C. had delighted in the "procession of books" at their school's library. Equipment and supplies at Box Hill Grammar were always carefully rationed and as late as 1957 practical work in senior science subjects was done at the nearby Box Hill High school. Many of the classrooms, as we have noted, were cast-offs, augmented by additions and alterations. There was no staff room.

Hansen's survey includes information on teaching staffs. In 1967, 69 percent were graduates and 23 per cent had other academic qualifications. At Box Hill Grammar the percentages were similar until

24. Interviews with Eileen Fallon and Bill Secombe.
the fifties when they fell to 55 per cent and 35 per cent respectively. Teachers at Box Hill Grammar generally stayed at the school for a shorter period of time than did teachers in Hansen's schools and a higher percentage in the fifties and sixties were younger: in 1961 over one half were aged 30 or less. During the last years of his headmastership Walker was at a disadvantage, at least when compared with better-known private schools, in terms of the capacity, the stability and experience of his teaching staff. One result was that complaints were made by parents and students.

It is the intention to discuss the important issue of teaching and academic standards in greater detail in a later chapter. It is important at this stage to observe that conditions were not entirely bleak. Three classrooms, built in 1930, were quite adequate and the school had ample grounds. Not all of the 24 acre site could be used by the students since Walker kept a small herd of dairy cattle in the south-west corner of the property and, for the best part of a decade, cultivated an acre or more to grow vegetables. Outdoor activities were popular and Walker rarely had difficulties attracting competent teachers of gymnastics or physical education.

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Any attempt to analyse Box Hill Grammar's financial problems after Walker was appointed headmaster is hampered by incomplete records and an absence of detail. Walker's personal papers contain little information. Conference Minutes present only summary financial statements for the period to 1944 when the church's Board of Education was responsible for the school and several years are missing of the

28. Ibid., pp. 167-68.
29. See pp. 95-104.
later records of council meetings. Nonetheless, it is clear that growing indebtedness plagued Walker. Funds spent on extensions and improvements were not covered by surpluses on the working account and so debts accumulated. In 1934, for example, the school had a "deficiency" of £379.15.8 and in 1940 the deficiency was £808. The steadily increasing value of the property and the capacity of the church to arrange and guarantee overdrafts at lower than prevailing interest rates with the Commercial Bank of Australia made it possible for the deficits to aggregate: by 1942, loans and overdrafts amounted to £14,550 and in 1963 they reached £92,852.

Although financial difficulties affected every year whilst Walker was headmaster, it is possible to divide the school's economic history into the periods before and after 1955 when the nature of the problem changed, and with it, Walker's responses. In essence, the period before 1955 was marked by financial constraints and was of fundamental importance in explaining the unusual features which emerged at Box Hill Grammar. In 1955, the constraints were removed and the way opened for expansion. This period is of minor relevance in terms of the stated aim of this thesis since, by the mid-fifties, Walker's most interesting work was complete. The school remained unusual but there were no initiatives as Walker became embroiled in disputes with school's governing authorities when Box Hill Grammar failed to expand as had been hoped. It is to the earlier period that we must now turn.

30. Board of Education Revenue account 1933 (as an insert) in Methodist Conference Minutes 1934; Minute Book of Board of Education, 31 March, 1941.


32. See pp. 125-127.
An examination of the published histories of non-government schools reveals that finance was most commonly a matter of considerable concern in the thirties. P.L.C. was an exception; it found that the depression's effects "were very minor" but at Tintern, school finances were in a " parlous state" and at Carey, a scheme of subscriptions introduced in 1931 held the year's deficit to £702, "although the school debt remained obstinately at £7,500." At M.L.C. the Finance and Advisory Committee reported in 1934 that "the financial stability of the College was in danger and its efficiency as a Public School under the control of the Methodist church was imperilled".

Box Hill Grammar's perilous economic state during the thirties was not uncommon. Events in its earlier years as a Methodist school formed the basis of its difficulties. As previously mentioned, in 1928 the Public Health Department threatened to close the Rose Street School, specifying a number of defects, most of which related to the condition of the toilets and inadequate ventilation and drainage in the science classroom. Russell, secretary of the council, wrote to the Department requesting "special dispensation", explaining that the school was in the process of negotiations for the purchase of a site in the vicinity on which ... we propose to erect modern and substantial school buildings" and agreeing to remedy the more obvious shortcomings.


35. Letter of J.E. Russell to Secretary, Public Health Department, 3 January, 1929, Closed Schools Files.

36. Ibid.
Russell's letter was successful in avoiding deregistration - the Rose Street Buildings were used "on sufferance" - but debts were incurred and the expenditure brought no lasting benefits.\(^{37}\)

A far more substantial debt was involved in securing the future home of the school. In 1928 the Board of Education, through Walker, made an offer of £8,000 for 24 acres owned by Campbell Edwards in Station Street, south of Canterbury Road.\(^{38}\) Edwards - a wealthy tea merchant - had bought the 40 acre property called Gwynton Park in 1905 with the intention of developing it as his residence. Mrs. Edwards had other ideas. Box Hill was too remote for her tastes, the roads were unpaved, and water had to be pumped by hand. She wanted to live closer to the city.\(^{39}\) Edwards leased the property, but by the end of the twenties, decided to sell. He thought the offer made by Walker too low, but became much more receptive when it was explained that the Methodist church planned to transfer Box Hill Grammar from Rose Street to Station Street. The vendor was devoted to the cause of Protestantism and with final negotiations in the hands of E.T. Bailey, banker, treasurer of the school and prominent layman, a price of £10,000 was agreed upon.\(^{40}\)

Once purchased, the property had to be converted into a school. Some £350 was spent on fencing and footpath construction, at least 11 guineas (one man and two horses at a guinea a day) on preparing an oval and £300 covered the cost of cleaning up and renovating a lodge which became the boarding house and the Walkers' residence.\(^{41}\) A schoolhouse

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38. Walker, C.F., "Incidents...."
39. Interview with Ethel Walker.
40. Methodist Conference Minutes 1945, p. 91: "it was largely his...(Bailey's)... vision that was responsible for securing of the B.H.G.S."
designed in the Collegiate-Gothic style of textured brickwork and red tiled roofs by Messrs. Bates, Smart and McCutcheon, was built in 1930 at a cost of £2,200. Each of its three rooms had grey brick walls and a white ceiling, a raised platform, bare floors and an inefficient fireplace with a stained hardwood mantelpiece in a front corner by the windows, but the cloisters, exposed to southerly winds and rain were not enclosed until 1950 due to a shortage of funds.

Walker's school was always short of money in these early years. In 1929 the roll - a reflection of the school's reputation - was a mere 31, and even though it rose to 63 in 1933, fees raised in the latter year were a little over £1,000 and were insufficient to cover immediate expenses, let alone generate surplus funds. Other Methodist schools had been more fortunate in their founding. Wesley had been given its ten ½ acres in St. Kilda Road and a government grant of £2,768 towards its establishment; M.L.C. was assisted by a gift from Conference of an acre of land which was sold for £7,500 and its branch school in Elsternwick began in 1931 with a debt-free asset due to the generosity of Fred Cato. Walker received no financial assistance from the government or the church and was forced to rely on fees and donations from interested citizens. Edwards gave £500, and, in 1933, agreed to reduce the purchase price of the property by another £500; those who attended a site-inspection day in May 1930 contributed £391, the Fathers' Association paid for the cost of preparing the oval, members of the Hothers' Club knitted and sewed at their

42. Reporter, 9 May, 1930; Walker, C.F., "Incidents..." has cost as £2,000, his Collected Essays, p. 8 has £2,300.
43. Interview with John Alexander.
44. S.H.G.S. Roll Book; Board of Education revenue account
45. Zainu'ddin, A.G., op. cit., pp. 5-6, 205.
meetings to produce clothes for fetes, paid one shilling a month subscription and gave money towards the fencing and footpath, and Cato, wealthy through the grocery business he ran in partnership with his cousin Thomas Moran, paid for the schoolhouse. But at the end of 1932, the school's liabilities, principally the amount owing on the purchase of Gwynton Park, were £13,617 and interest payments were £583: by way of contrast, M.L.C.'s debt at the same time was £20,000, but the girls' school had more adequate grounds and buildings, a reputation, and more importantly, a role of 600.

Based on a reading of his diaries, Walker was most disappointed with the lack of help from the Nicholas brothers who had made a fortune from the manufacture and sale of "Aspros" and whose donations to other Methodist schools were substantial. George Nicholas occasionally visited the school at Box Hill; the Walker children were paraded before him, but the Nicholas brothers' interest was rarely financial and when it was, never as much as Walker hoped. They paid £1,000 as a deposit on the property and half of the cost of the fencing and footpath, but Walker was never able to understand why he was unable to tap a larger share of their generosity. Perhaps his genuine admiration of men who achieved success was obscured, as he spoke with potential donors, by an ill-concealed resentment towards wealth -


48. Walker, C.F., Diary, 1 December, 1957; G.R. Nicholas paid £630 for fencing around the school oval: "the first decent bit of assistance he has offered for 20 years or so." Ailsa Zainu'ddin, in conversation with the author, has suggested that the Nicholas brothers may not have favoured co-education - their donations to M.L.C. were used to build domestic science facilities, suggesting perhaps, a view that the education of girls should be treated separately from the education of boys.

49. Methodist Conference Minutes 1930, p. 130.
in a sermon Walker preached that men should "order their business affairs not so that a few can become rich and get the prizes there are". It is more likely that Walker failed to understand that businessmen are interested in the facts revealed by financial reports rather than in hopes based on enthusiasm.

It is certain that the Board of Education knew of Walker's problems, especially as the Great Depression closed in on Australian society. Late in 1928 it had solved the problem of the previous administration's unpaid debts in a rather novel way and at the expense of the school's reputation, disclaiming them on the grounds that the previous "...council was a separate and distinct body". A year later, the Board attempted to abolish the boarding section of the school on the grounds of economy, but Walker fought strongly against this proposal and was successful, recommending "that the school pay me a fixed amount from the boarding fees to pay for ... (the boarders)... keep". By 1931, Conference was advised that the "Box Hill School is not yet paying its way". Walker, ever optimistic, had a master plan for the future development of his school drawn by an architect: he eagerly brought it out to show those who expressed interest and mused over it in mellow moments. Whether he could have guessed that over the next quarter of a century there would be no new classrooms, no new dormitory and no fine sporting area is problematical, but his plan served to sustain him when he was confronted by the Conference's next attempt to solve Box Hill Grammar's financial difficulties.

50. Walker, C.F. Sermon notes on "What Christianity Means to us", undated.
51. Letter of Miss Gilman Jones of M.C.R.G.G.S., 14 January, 1929 in Closed School Files: the council is "quite capable of saying that...(Box Hill Grammar)...is the same school when applying...(for registration)... and is not, when dealing with tradesmen's accounts."
52. Walker, C.F. "Incidents..."
54. Interview with John Alexander, Bill Secombe.
In 1936, Conference decided that "the matter of co-operation of our educational institutions be referred to the Board of Education...with the object of finding some means of ... (assisting) ... the weaker ones".\(^{55}\) As headmaster of one of the church's schools, Walker had attended this Conference. He understood quite well which school was the "weakest" and feared that co-operation meant absorption. Enraged, he wrote to E.T. Bailey, announcing that if a rumour that Wesley was about to take over Box Hill Grammar proved correct, "I would not be staying. I think the project would be a failure, but apart from that I have no desire to be a member of the staff of Wesley College." He added that he could readily find employment in the High schools and that his own children could be educated there, but he would be "quite glad" to stay at Box Hill and "develop this school along modern lines - which would not be Wesley College lines".\(^{56}\) Walker's hostility invites analysis. There was a degree of resentment. Walker had, after all, been invited to lead the church's educational mission in the outer eastern suburbs and, captive of a financial crisis not of his own making, had worked for eight years to keep the school afloat. "Co-operation" was an admission of failure; it involved a waste of years and it placed Walker's reputation and future career in jeopardy. Walker's remarks about Wesley reveal that more was involved: it is likely that he thought that Box Hill Grammar was developing a type of education which differed from the traditional.

The Board of Education took little notice of its headmaster's complaint. In 1937, it invited the Council of Wesley College "to consider whether and to what extent" it would "accept control of Box Hill Grammar as a branch of Wesley".\(^{57}\) Walker was now confirmed in his

\(^{55}\) Methodist Conference Minutes 1936, p. 89.  
^{56}\) Letter of Walker to E.T. Bailey, 27 December, 1936.  
^{57}\) Methodist Conference Minutes 1937, pp. 126-127.
opinion that the Board unfairly favoured Wesley: "Certain members of the Board...dictate these things", he accused, adding that "we need a vigorous Council that is bound up in Box Hill Grammar and no other school ...(and is)...in sympathy with the objectives of the school". 58 In detecting an element of malice in the Board's stance, Walker had probably gone too far. The truth was that the Board was concerned only with matters of financial management: judgements as to the worth or otherwise of the Box Hill venture were hardly possible since its members rarely visited the school to observe its operation.

There was truth in the assertion that the Board favoured Wesley: ten of its members also sat on the Wesley council and the influential Professor Calvert Barber was described by a colleague as one who, in particular, "put the Wesley College point of view". 59 That the Board's sympathies lay with Wesley is not surprising: most of its members had been educated there and naturally took a keen interest in the affairs of the major Methodist school for boys.

The Board knew that space was a major problem at the St. Kilda Road school and that there had been suggestions that the school be re-sited. The old boys and the rowing men had disagreed: "these magnolia trees, these grey towers, these grounds, this accessible lake; these were Wesley". 60 In September, 1933, the President of Wesley College Council reported that "Messrs. A.M. and G.R. Nicholas have offered to meet the cost of rebuilding the College estimated at £100,000". 61 With this, the largest gift ever made to an Australian school, Wesley was rebuilt in 1933-34 but its grounds remained inadequate. In September 1937, it's Council accepted the Board's invitation, agreeing to "subsidize the deficit of Box Hill Grammar School for a period

58. Walker, C.F., a fragmentary note in his personal papers.
59. Interview with Harry McCutcheon.
60. Blainey, G., op. cit., p. 171.
61. Wesley College Minutes, 27 September, 1933.
of three years...subject to an option then being given to Wesley College to take over the property". Wartime conditions interfered with the takeover plans, but in 1946 negotiations were re-opened "so that in due course ...(Wesley's) ... Junior School... may be transferred to the Box Hill site". It was resolved, also, that "no new commitments shall be entered into by the Box Hill Grammar School Council except on lines acceptable to Wesley College Council". Under the terms of the option, it was forbidden to spend money on capital items at Box Hill Grammar beyond repairs and minor modifications.

Box Hill Grammar and Walker waited, dangling on Wesley's delay in making a final decision. Representatives from the Grammar's council pressed hard for a resolution. Harry McCutcheon asked, in 1952, that Wesley "define its attitude in regard to the Box Hill Grammar School property". He pointed out that "several years had elapsed since it had assumed responsibility", that there was "no knowledge of any plans for the building of a new Wesley College Junior School", that "it was becoming increasingly difficult to carry on...as the staff was working under a sense of uncertainty" and that, due to the option, "the existing building and equipment at Box Hill" were quite inadequate.

Three months later, McCutcheon renewed his attack, threatening to force the issue by moving at Conference that Wesley produce building "plans as soon as practicable".

Wesley produced its plans on 24 June, 1953. Walker, who was overseas at the time wrote to his wife expressing his concern. "Our lives are in your hands", he confessed, adding that he was worried that "we ...(might)...lose the battle and ...(be) ...thrown on the world".

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62. Ibid., 27 September, 1937.
63. Wesley College Executive Committee Minutes, 10 June, 1946, 19 June, 1946.
64. Wesley College Minutes, 26 November, 1952.
65. Ibid., 18 February, 1953.
Wesley found to its consternation that a Junior School built at Box Hill would cost between £130,000 and £175,000 not including improvements to the playing fields, furniture and equipment. Facing "a formidable financial problem" as well as increased enrolments at Walker's school which promised viability, a joint meeting of the councils of the two schools was held to finally resolve the issue. There was a place for Box Hill, it decided in language less than flattering, "in providing church school education of a standard acceptable to many people who could not afford public school fees". It is doubtful whether Walker found the words offensive - he was mightily relieved that his school was to be freed from Wesley's constraints and, as we shall see, was little impressed by the notion of "standards". In 1955, Conference confirmed "that the property be handed back to the Box Hill Grammar School Council".

For almost twenty years Walker worked under trying conditions. His responses, as we shall see, included concert tours to country areas to attract custom, a "temporary" building programme and the operation of a dairy and a farm - all reflections of his determination that the school survive.

It is significant that Walker described this as a period of "slow strangulation". He blamed the Board of Education and Box Hill Grammar's council for his school's financial predicament and, although we shall shortly see that there were some grounds for his complaint, his judgement should not be accepted uncritically. The Methodist church was responsible, as for example, the 98 pages devoted to financial reports of its agencies in Conference Minutes of 1955 demonstrate,

67. Wesley College Minutes, 24 June, 1953.
68. Wesley College Minutes, joint meeting of Wesley College council and Box Hill Grammar School council, 22 June, 1953.
70. Walker, C.P., fragmentary notes.
for an energetic mission to the societies of Victoria and Tasmania. It believed, as the early history of M.L.C. shows, that its educational institution should be as near as possible to self-supporting. Did Walker imagine that the church should have abandoned or modified its educational policy of self-sufficiency to the detriment of its wider mission to actively support its struggling school at Box Hill? No evidence exists of Walker having appreciated that without the Board's initiatives, which resulted in financial assistance from Wesley over the period of the option, Box Hill Grammar may well have been forced to close.

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The origins of Walker's disputes with the school's governing authorities - the last of the unusual circumstances which affected Walker and the shape of his school - can be traced back to the decision of the church to accept the offer of Box Hill Grammar made whilst Strugnell was headmaster in 1928. Four aspects of the English Wesleyan concern for education had by that time, been matched by development in Australia. Taken together, these initiatives represented a coherent application of John Wesley's dictum that education should be the servant of religion. In the first place, Kingswood School (1748) and Woodhouse Grove School (1812) both demonstrated the interest of Wesley and his followers in educating the sons of ministers. Wesley College, Melbourne (1866) was established in part to perform the same function and M.L.C.'s historian suggests that the girls'...
school was created in 1882 to "cater in particular for the daughters of itinerant Methodist ministers". Secondly, there was concern in England to provide elementary and Sunday schools for children of the working class. In Victoria, this same concern resulted, by the 1870's, in a higher proportion of the children of Wesleyan Methodists being able to read and write than those from other denominations. The Education Act in Victoria of 1872, which established the responsibility of the state for elementary education and abolished state aid, forced the church to concentrate on the third aspect of its educational mission. The creation of the Wesley Proprietary School at Sheffield in 1838 had represented acceptance by the church to provide education beyond the elementary level for wealthier members of the flock. In Australia, Methodist schools which catered for boys from the middle class (and, through low fees, for boys of the upper working class) were Horton College, Tasmania (1855), Newington College, Sydney, (1863), Wesley College, Melbourne, (1866) and Prince Alfred College, Adelaide (1868). Finally the education of girls beyond an elementary level was not neglected: the church opened schools for middle class and upper working class girls in Victoria (1882), Tasmania and New South Wales (1886) and in South Australia (1902).

The depression of the 1890's delayed consideration by Conference of expanding the number of Methodist schools. In 1895 the aggregate debt of M.L.C. and Wesley was £27,000; Wesley had only 106 students and M.L.C. had 145. Recovery in the economy coincided with greater public interest in education. In 1907, there were between 7,000 and 8,000 boys and girls in both government and non-government secondary schools in Victoria, a figure which rose to 16,000 in the early twenties.

75. Zainu'ddin, A.G., op. cit., p. 35.
76. Ibid., pp. 26-27.
79. Ibid., p. 91.
80. Ibid., p. 166.
Enrolments at both Wesley and M.L.C. increased - in both cases the roll exceeded 500 by 1921 - but fears were raised by all churches that they were in danger of losing contact with the younger generation.\footnote{Ibid., p. 166.} Baptists, for example, argued for the creation of Carey on the grounds that their children were "compelled to seek their education in the schools established by other denominations" and that the church needed "men of ability and means to help us in our great missionary tasks at home and abroad".\footnote{Sayers, S., op. cit., p. 6.}

In one sense, given the previous record of the Methodist church in establishing schools, it is possible to regard the Board of Education's acquisition of Box Hill Grammar as a continuation of attempts to extend the Christian faith. Walker's prospectus of 1929, for all its convoluted expression, supports this impression. The aim of Box Hill Grammar, it states, was "to thoroughly equip boys for the battle of life, to train them to become manly, clean-living, God-fearing and God-loving members of society; to make them realize that 'no man lives for himself'; in short, to train them in the highest ideals of citizenship".\footnote{B.H.G.S. Prospectus, 1929.}

In another sense it is arguable that the deep sense of an educational mission noted in the creation of earlier Methodist schools and institutions was diluted in the case of Walker and his school. Put simply, Walker thought with some justification that the church was not wholeheartedly interested in the education offered by Box Hill Grammar. It is significant that the Board of Education was created in 1918 to open or acquire schools. It visited important regional centres including Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong but nothing came from these investigations.\footnote{Zainu'ddin, A.G., op. cit., p. 169.} In 1926, in a report to Conference, the secretary...
of the Board stated that "the directors regret that they have been unable...to give practical effect to their ideals in the way of providing new schools for the young people of the Methodist church." He added that "the entire absence of funds is a serious difficulty confronting us".85 This was indeed a serious problem, especially since, at the same period of time, other churches, notably the Church of England and the Presbyterian, had managed to establish a ring of schools around the suburbs of Melbourne.86 The Board finally fulfilled its function in 1929 by acquiring Box Hill Grammar at very little cost to the church. In a context of sectarian rivalry, a school had become available on most favourable terms.

It is most unfortunate that no record survives of the deliberation of the Board as it considered the offer of the Rose Street school, but the suspicion which grew in Walker's mind that the church's motives were not essentially educational gained strength in the light of later events. In 1929, as we have seen, the Board attempted to abolish the school's boarding house. Walker's solution must have been financially acceptable, but the incident fuelled doubts about the Board's understanding of a significant function of Methodist schools. In 1933 Walker introduced girls into the secondary section of his school; the Board accepted this since it increased the roll and not because it had a policy on this educational issue. In 1937 the Board was asked to "consider fully the question of co-education in church schools": "war conditions" prevented progress in its deliberations but, in 1947, the report of its successor stated that "The Commission finds itself quite unable to decide".87

Financial considerations continued to dominate relations between Walker and the Board. We have seen that Wesley's option, in providing funds, was a factor in Box Hill Grammar's survival, but it also meant that expansion on the Station Street site was severely restricted. In 1941, the Board requested Walker to "limit as far as possible the subjects offered ... for the Intermediate examination with a view to possible economy in the number of teachers employed." It recommended as well, that the school's position be reviewed "in order to consider the desirability of further ... consideration of the school's activities ... by restricting it to the sub-Intermediate stage ... or even by establishing it exclusively as a preparatory school".88 By this time Walker was totally convinced that the Board was deliberately obstructive and that economy rather than any educational vision guided its actions. He regarded the attempt to restrict the numbers at the senior level as a threat to the school's future, placed his senior students in junior classes and arranged with his staff to give them special tuition.89

In 1944 the Board decided to hand its responsibilities over to a school council. The Board had been a conservative body: its membership of 20 in 1943 included such prominent laymen as E.T. Bailey, his son, Professor K.H. Bailey and N.H. MacNeil, headmaster of Wesley and eight of its eleven clerics, amongst them A.H. Wood, principal of M.L.C., Irving Benson and Calvert Barber had been or were to become Presidents of Conference - men who represented traditional Methodist thinking.90 The Board's decision was a recognition of the fact,

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88. Minute Book of Board of Education, 20 February, 1941.

89. Interviews with Bill Secombe, Ethel Walker. Minutes of Executive and Finance Committee of the Board of Education, 29 April, 1943: "Headmaster stated that this interpretation of the instructions was that they applied only to 1942". It is most likely that Walker was able to evade the instruction due to the school's increase in numbers during the war.

90. Methodist Church Index of Circuits and Appointments, passim.
(which it admitted) that control of the school had been unsatisfactory: it had been founded in 1918 to create Methodist schools and not to administer them and only a few of its members had any personal contact with the school. 91

The new school council of 1944 was "subject to the general direction of Conference", a barrier to autonomy which was appropriate given the school's perilous economic condition. 92 Consequently, council membership was made up overwhelmingly of men approved or nominated by Conference: in 1955, for example, eleven of the 21 members were clerics and the rest were responsible laymen. 93 In 1956, a new constitution was granted to Box Hill Grammar as it had gained freedom from Wesley's option. The council gained control of its own financial affairs as well as the power to appoint the school's headmaster. 94 Membership was expanded to 26 to include a representative of parents and a larger number of Old Grammarians, eleven were Methodist ministers, and all required Conference approval. 95 In essence the council from 1956 onwards differed little in composition from its predecessor but had gained a great deal more power.

There were no signs of better relationships between the headmaster and his new master. At the first meeting of council in March, 1944, Walker found two of his previous initiatives under fire. In the first place, the farming out of boarders was ended and, secondly, it was decided to consider the question of co-education. The council resolved, after the war ended, that "the time is now ripe for the policy to revert to that of being a boys' school". 96 Walker responded - the pattern had been established in his relations with the Board

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91. Minute Book of Board of Education, 13 September, 1943.
92. Ibid.
94. Walker, C.F., "School Records".
of Education - by acting as independently as he was able.

No better example exists of his style than the construction of the school oval. In the late thirties, the old Grammarians had begun to raise money for an oval to commemorate the sacrifices made by old boys during the Great War. To Walker, war was the ultimate obscenity, but the project became a minor obsession, a symbol of independent action in the face of obstruction. Fund raising, interrupted by the second war, resumed in 1948 augmented by profits from the school play. This was, of course, quite contrary to the terms of Wesley's option which expressly forbade developments on the Station Street site without permission. In 1949 Wesley's council expressed its concern that "certain action...has been...taken by C.F. Walker to raise funds for a Memorial Oval". Walker ignored Wesley's request to proceed no further and in 1952 the Old Grammarians and Mothers' Club combined to hold a fete and gymkhana which raised over £800 towards the estimated excavation costs of £2,250. In 1956 Conference was informed that the Memorial Oval was complete and Walker rejoiced in his victory, describing it as a "thing of beauty". When a turf wicket was provided at a cost of £80, Walker was so delighted that he wrote to his friends that he was considering the addition of T.P. (Turf Pitch) to his list of qualifications.

Disputes between headmasters and governing authorities were not unknown at other schools. Wood at M.L.C. was more fortunate that most headmasters and was able to write up the minutes of his executive meetings

98 Programme for "Three Scenes from the Blue Bird", 23 July 1948 "in aid of War Memorial Oval Fund."
99 Wesley College Minutes, 28 September, 1949.
101 Methodist Conference Minutes 1956, p. 87.
102 Walker, C.F. Diary, 19 December, 1957.
"beforehand with the anticipated decisions". At the other extreme was the experience of V.F.O. Francis who was forced to resign as headmaster of Carey in 1947 following complaints from his teaching staff. Stewart and MacNeil at Wesley had their problems. Stewart was appointed as successor to Adamson in 1932 on the proviso that if the council saw fit not to re-appoint him he was not to accept the headmastership of a "competing" school and MacNeil "found himself at times ranged against virtually all of Wesley - the council, the staff...prefects, boys, old boys, parents". Walker's survival in spite of his disputes owed something, according to his son Evan, to the respect given his wife as a member of the family that had been influential in the building of the local church in Oxford Street in 1928. It is more likely, however, that Walker's survival had been due to respect earned from men like the Nicholas brothers and Calvert Barber who recognized the worth of Walker's energy and persistence during the troubled times of Wesley's option. In the final years, however, Walker was unable to accept Conference's decision of 1961 that the abolition of co-education might make Box Hill Grammar more attractive as a boys' school and so increase enrolments.

It is important to observe that Walker's relationship with the school's authorities was a significant factor, at least in the earlier years, in helping to create unconventional responses. Walker, convinced that the Board of Education's function, and that of its successor, was simply economic, assumed that he alone was capable of providing

106. Interview with Evan Walker.
educational leadership. He also discovered - the incidents relating to the attempts to close the boarding house, and to restrict the size of his senior school are good examples - that it was possible to evade directions. In all, Walker came to resent what he regarded as interference, reacted against conservatism, enjoyed being the "Boss" and, as far as possible, went his own way.

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Michael Norman who followed Walker as headmaster has written that "from 1930 to 1963, Box Hill Grammar ... was for some hundreds of scholars both a home and a school of which they are extraordinarily proud". Interviews with ex-students largely confirm this comment - they recalled schooldays with affection and pride - but the strongest impression gained in the interviews was loyalty to Walker rather than to the school. The truth would appear to be that captive of Walker's dominance, Box Hill Grammar was an expression of eclectic theorizing and pragmatic practice. The results, as we shall see in later chapters, may have in many ways been interesting and enjoyable for young children and adolescents, but more often than not, especially in the final years, they were chaotic. Some ex-students were able to recognize that romanticising the past avoided the responsibility of comprehending it. Wendy Lowenstein, a student of the early forties and author of Weavils in the Flour has described the school as "messy" since it lacked the coherent educational stance of a Koornong on the one hand, or of a Wesley on the other. Jean Provan, daughter of the headmaster and more perceptive, it seems, of her father's shortcomings than the other children, has drawn attention to another consequence of Walker's leadership. Professions

109. Interview with Wendy Lowenstein.
of freedom and equality lay uneasily with authoritarianism. In a sense, Box Hill Grammar was an example of how dangerous it can be for one man to dominate a school so completely.

110. Interview with Jean Provan
CHAPTER THREE

PRAGMATISM AND THEORY

Former students and staff members have recalled a number of features of Walker's school which they regard as unusual or unconventional. Some of the features - the farm, concert tours and the nature of the accommodation - were created out of the economic struggles described in the previous chapter. Another - co-education - was probably the result of a blending of economic need with educational conviction. Finally, there were aspects of the school involving the concept of freedom which were largely the result of Walker's borrowing from the ideas of progressive educators.

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Walker's responses to the long period of financial constraint went beyond the evasion of directives from the Board of Education or his school council. He realized that a flourishing school might avoid a takeover and so he worked hard to cut costs and raise revenue, increase enrolments and provide accommodation. In this process the primary aim was survival but there were also secondary educational benefits.

In 1930, a small source of income for the school was obtained by letting the major part of Gwyn ton Park to a dairy farmer for 30 shillings a week. The farmer fell behind with his rent and was evicted. Interested in securing a supply of milk at low cost, Walker purchased a cow for £14. It was customary to pay £1 per quart and "Blossom" produced 14 quarts. With help from his groundsman Herb. Jemmeson and, significantly, from interested boarders, Walker pulled down some unsightly buildings behind a cottage on the property and used the material to build a serviceable cowshed and dairy. Blossom was,

2. Ibid., p. 9.
3. Ibid.,
with the exception of a small kangaroo which lived for a time under some branches in the woodshed, the only animal grazing on the property and before long was producing as much as 24 quarts a day. This was clearly more than the house needed: the solution to the problem was to go into business. A licence was obtained, a cooler installed and water laid on from a nearby underground spring. More cows were necessary to cover the fall in production caused by cold weather and before long Box Hill Grammar was home to a herd of 12 animals. Sometimes the local dairy, due to a glut of milk, refused to buy from the school. Walker's solution was to buy a Baltic-Simplex separator. The cream, apart from that used at the house, was sold to Moran and Cato's butter factory and the skim milk was fed - Walker had bought a bull - to heifers. Some of the heifers were sold as vealers, others were reared until they went on to grass, later to be sold in calf.

In the early years of the war, the scale of the farming activities at Box Hill Grammar was expanded. The scarcity of vegetables and their consequent high prices worried Walker. He noted with concern the rising prices paid for potatoes as he shopped at the Victoria Market, and when the price reached £5 a bag, decided that the school should grow some or all of its own needs. He bought a draught horse - "Nugget" - a scarifier and a harrow. Again helped by boarders (whose parents were amused by the fact that their sons learnt to plough behind a horse in the city), Walker soon had over an acre of crops under cultivation. Water from a dam on the property was channelled

4. Ibid., p. 10.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., p. 12
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
in to an irrigation system and, despite Walker's tendency to plant carrots at the wrong time of the year, the boarders had a supply of fresh vegetables. 11

The war years also saw an enlargement of the school's dairy. Use was made of the skim milk to rear a few pigs. "You buy three or four 'porkers' or sucking pigs", Walker explained, "feed them on skim milk, household scraps and grain and sell them to a butcher one by one till you have only one left - a 'baconer'. We used to get this baconer cured into hams and bacon at 'Huttons' at Preston for threepence a pound". Unable to use much ham and bacon, the school "sold a few 'sides of bacon' to a delicatessen shop". 12 Experiments with a pig-gery were not long lasting since the demand for milk from the local dairyman was prone to "suddenly increase and you had to stop separating (except household cream) and keep up your milk supply". 13 Walker kept goats for a short period of time but abandoned the project when, in the absence of secure fences, he found that, tethered, they were too readily prey for dogs. 14

The farm survived until after the war. In the late forties, the Housing Commission commenced building around the school. Fences were taken down and the cows too easily escaped into the neighbourhood. 15 At the same time free milk for students was provided by the government. 16 The cows were sold. A few years later fruit fly invaded the district. Forbidden to produce, the school was given £50 compensation by the Department of Agriculture; its draught horse - by now it was "Bonny" - was retained as a mower of lawns. 17 A distinctive

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11. Interviews with Jack Watson, staff member of the thirties, Ethel Walker.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
episode in the life of Box Hill Grammar ended, but looking back, Walker simply noted that it was "not a good idea (except in extremities) to have a vegetable garden close to a school building because the soil... tends to be blown by the wind as dust into the buildings".  

Walker enjoyed much of the work involved in the farm. "After milking", he wrote in 1933, "I drove the cows out of the back paddock and lay in the grass in the shade....and let the cool south breeze blow on me while the cows browsed in the beautiful long grass, and David and Eric and John Alexander made daisy chains a little higher up the hill". Walker was reminded as he worked of the 8th psalm, and found that his self-image as provider and head of the family was re-inforced. He even enjoyed the odd mishap, and was able to laugh (in later years) at the time his car loaded with two milk cans rolled into the dam, and at his buying a cow that was "crook in one quarter". But for the most part, it was a serious matter: the boarders had plenty of milk, cream and vegetables and the small profits were used to expand the school's meagre facilities. What was most significant is that the farm became an important aspect of Box Hill's educational offering. Lessons in Biology were possible. Walker noted that he was "pleased at the serious, matter-of-fact way" his students took cows to the bull, and classes were always interrupted during calving. One small boy was so impressed that he was able to tell his mother, with an observer's precision, where calves came from. Mother, it seems, was not equally impressed and she took her son from the school preferring a more conventional school where such secrets remained hidden. Arithmetic and Geography were given a practical basis. The milk was weighed and recorded. The quantity of concentrates fed

18. Ibid.  
20. Interview with Jack Watson.  
to the herd was tabulated and the effects of irrigation from the dam to the crops noticed.23

How unusual were the dairy and farm at Box Hill Grammar? Mention has been made of Fourier and his emphasis on gardening: in the English speaking world a good example of the utopian desire to return to nature and avoid the complications of industrial society is to be found at Cecil Reddie's Abbotsholme, an English country boarding school which had its hey-day during the closing years of the nineteenth century.24

Part of Reddie's curriculum - timetabled between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. - was the requirement that his boys be involved in manual labour which included working on an agricultural plot. This was to encourage an interest in arithmetic and chemistry - later work at Dewey's Laboratory School (1896-1903) demonstrated that this was so - and there were added benefits derived from the pleasure of the boys as they worked together for the good of the school community.25 Physical work of this type became an important strand of progressive educational thinking and was not unknown in Australian schools. Frank Tate, Director of Education in Victoria between 1902 and 1928, was interested in nature study, a related issue,"partly because it symbolized... a turning away from 'that conventional and bookish information' towards 'reality', and the pursuit of knowledge which had a 'close connection' with the interests of children and led to 'real power' because it could be applied to the problems of everyday life".26 The schools of the theosophists created after the Great War - Mosman Garden School, North Sydney, King Arthur School, Neutral Bay and St. Margaret's, Devonport - had large vegetable gardens.27 The central factor which

23. Ibid., p. 10.
27. Petersen, R.C., op. cit., p. 64.
set the rural activities at Box Hill Grammar apart from those envisaged by Fourier and Tate and practised at progressive schools was intention. Walker's farm, rather like the vegetable gardens cultivated at schools including M.L.C. during the war, was an example of pragmatic thinking and was never fully integrated into the school's curriculum or based on educational philosophy. It raised money or helped overcome shortages: only as a by-product did it occupy some of the boarders' energies, counter their homesickness and provide the opportunity for instruction. Nonetheless, in the absence of activities on a similar scale over a lengthy period of time at conventional schools, Walker's animals and crops were a significant aspect of Box Hill Grammar's unusual nature.

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From the earliest years, Walker embarked on an active search for pupils, realizing that his very small roll endangered his school's viability. There were clear limits to what he could do. Frank Shann, head of Trinity, had floated that school as a company: in this way local residents could become shareholders and this provided Trinity with a solid basis of local support. For Walker such a possibility was out of the question. Apart from the probability that the Methodist church, having recently acquired the property, would have been unwilling to relinquish its control, local support for the Grammar school was limited. Box Hill was not a wealthy suburb and Walker's school, as we have seen, did not enjoy a high reputation in the district after its troubles of the twenties. Between 1930 and 1937 only 20 per cent of the Grammar School's enrolments came from Box Hill - those parents who could afford fees apparently preferred to

30. Lemon, A., op. cit., p. 189: "people had always settled...(in Box Hill)...with more optimism than capital."
patronize more stable institutions accessible by train and closer to the city.\textsuperscript{31} Equally, Walker was quite unable to attract clientele, as Wesley had done during the mid thirties, by rebuilding and offering improved facilities. In Wesley's case, the funds for the project came from the Nicholas brothers who were mostly indifferent to Walker's attempts to attract financial support; the church believed in self-sufficiency and after 1937 the terms of the option effectively prevented capital development on the site.

Unable to generate local support or provide attractive conditions, Walker explored his only remaining option - publicity. Box Hill Grammar was well served by public transport and so was readily accessible from surrounding suburbs such as Surrey Hills, Mont Albert and Canterbury to the west and Blackburn and Mitcham to the east. The railway line, less than a mile to the north of the school, ran from Melbourne to Lilydale and connected with Rennie's canvas hooded hackney bus with seats along its side, which plied along Station Street.\textsuperscript{32} There were other buses which used Canterbury Road and a tramway line along Riversdale Road. Walker determined to bring himself and his school under the notice of prospective parents living outside Box Hill. He preached at churches on Sundays, invariably on themes related to children and education - a favourite sermon was "Come, let us live with our children" - and always took selected boarders with him as ambassadors who sang as a choir, read lessons or were simply obvious.\textsuperscript{33}

Walker's search for clients was not confined to the suburbs. There had been only three boarders in 1930, but by 1935 as the rural economy revived, there were 25 out of a total roll of 82.\textsuperscript{34} The school roll

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31} Statistics taken from B.H.G.S. Roll
\item \textsuperscript{32} Interview with John Alexander; the route of the bus was checked with the proprietor.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Interview with John Alexander, Jean Prowan.
\item \textsuperscript{34} B.H.G.S. Roll
\end{itemize}
at that time recorded the addresses of the boarders' parents. Walker decided he could most effectively promote his school in the north of Victoria and southern and eastern Gippsland. In 1938 he bought a second hand "straight 8" Studebaker, attracted to the car because with a little cramming it was capable of seating about a dozen pupils. It was not a reliable vehicle — more than once it was towed to its destination — but its main function was to provide transport to selected country areas. Walker hoped that the Studebaker would provide the means by which information could be spread to selected country areas about his city school which had rural characteristics.

It is difficult to decide whether Walker and his concert parties from Box Hill Grammar were successful in their initial aim of increasing enrolments. The proportion of boarders to enrolments rose from 35 per cent in 1937 to 51 percent in 1943, but the out-break of war presented Walker with as many boarders as he could readily manage. Many parents, often separated, eagerly sought boarding accommodation to provide their children with security in troubled times. Box Hill Grammar was particularly attractive: brothers could remain with sisters, and it was out of the city and away from the coastline. So the war (for all its shortages and rationing) was probably more significant in increasing the size of the boarding house than anything Walker attempted.

Walker continued with the concert parties until wartime petrol restrictions made them impossible. He even planned to go to other States and New Zealand. His enthusiasm, given that the war may have provided him with as many boarders as he could cope with, suggests that Walker realized that the tours brought educational benefits.

36. B.H.G.S. Roll
38. Walker, C.F. "Incidents..."
At the very least they allowed for a release from the normal school routine. They were great fun, the subject of quite intense anticipation and an experience in collective - since teachers and students planned and rehearsed together - responsibility. As we shall later see, they were "projects" which Walker saw as essential to character development.

A tour to the Goulburn Valley in May, 1940, serves to illustrate the point. The party left Box Hill in the Studebaker, lunched at Broadford and arrived at Katamatite, via Benalla, at 4.00 p.m.

On Sunday, Walker preached at Dunbullbalane, Katamatite and Cobram on the virtues of children staying at school beyond the age of 14, the choir sang "Lord of our Being", "Green Pastures" and "Fierce Raged the Tempest" and Brian Williams, who had a fine boy soprano's voice, sang solos. The following night a concert was held at the Katamatite Mechanics Hall. Apart from items from the choir and Williams's singing, two scenes were given from "A Midsummer Night's Dream"; Doug Barelli, after much prompting, agreed to recite (he took elocution lessons at Mitcham with some reluctance) and Walker screened films, mostly cartoons, on his Kodascope projector between acts. The following day the party journeyed to Numurkah. The concert was also offered at Wunghnu and a few people from Numurkah travelled across to hear the items for a second time. The children were clearly enjoying themselves but there were signs of fatigue - Pyramus found it difficult to continue at one stage "owing to a scarcely concealed fit of the giggles". On Thursday night a concert was held at Rushworth Sunday School Hall: the party then moved on to Nathalia, detouring to Berriigan to the property of the parents of a current boarder where "a table loaded with good things" was provided. Saturday was a rest

39. B.H.G.S. Chronicle, 3 October, 1940 provided details of this concert tour.
day and the boys and girls relaxed playing tennis. On Sunday, Walker took three services; one at Yanka South and two at Nathalia where again he was supported by items from his students. There was a concert on Monday night and on Tuesday the party returned home.

This tour to Goulburn Valley was not exceptional. Later in the same year, Walker went to Rupanyup and in 1941 tours were made to Bright, Myrtleford and Benalla during the May holidays and to Korumburra and Leongatha in September. In 1942, the *Avoca Free Press and Farmer's Journal* welcomed a tour from Box Hill Grammar, reported on Walker's sermons on "The Importance of the Child in National Progress", applauded the concert which included a parody on *Julius Caesar*, physical culture displays and dancing and appreciated the donation of the proceeds to the Avoca Methodist Sunday School, Red Cross, Comforts Fund and the Prisoner of War Fund.

There can be little doubt that the concert tours were an unusual feature of Box Hill Grammar's routine shortly before and during the war. The author's research reveals no parallels - as a response to the common problem of attracting clients, Walker can be seen as innovative. This is not to suggest, however, that Box Hill Grammar's headmaster was "progressive" simply because he chose an unconventional approach to the problem. Rather his approach was interesting and worthy of note: the concert parties were carefully chosen and never reflective of a total school commitment to "see new districts, meet fresh folk... (or)... learn something of country life and conditions".

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As enrolments increased, Walker was faced with the problem of providing

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40. Interviews with John Alexander, Evan Walker.
42. Walker, C.F. "Incidents...."
accommodation. This was no easy task since in 1931 the Board of Education had announced that the "ultimate development" of the school was "deferred", a situation confirmed by Wesley's interest in the property and the terms of its option. Walker's solution was to persuade the Board to allow "temporary" provisions. In 1932, the Queen's College Council offered Box Hill Grammar its old chemistry laboratory, an offer made possible because the Nicholas brothers had promised to provide funds for the building of a new science block. The laboratory was carried to Box Hill by a horse team and jinker. It caused considerable disorder to traffic when it was held up at the Box Hill railway gates for it would not fit under the cables.

The roof of the building was removed in mid-street and the Victorian Railways obliged by raising the wires. Walker and Jemmeson cleaned up the building and it was used as a gymnasium. In 1934 it was pressed into service as a classroom and Assembly Hall. Its use as a classroom was possible only because Walker ignored repeated prohibitions from the Health Department which considered it to be too long, having inadequate lighting and poorly ventilated. The building had other defects: the floor had had chemicals spilt on it, a robust student's foot disappeared through a corroded piece of timber and cold draughts whistled through gaps in the flooring. Undaunted, Walker contracted with the Board for a renewal of the flooring and Jemmeson did the job.

43. Methodist Conference Minutes 1931, p. 71.
45. Ibid., p. 15; see also Methodist Conference Minutes 1931, p. 70, 1932, p. 138.
In 1933, Box Hill Grammar received a gift of a sports pavilion — the "Pav." — from Wesley College. In 1936, the North Melbourne Methodist Mission made alterations and offered the school a small wooden structure in which parcels for missionaries had been packed. Jemmeson prepared it for removal by sawing it in half; it was shifted to Box Hill, a bathroom and toilet added (with Walker doing much of the labour), and soon it was in service as a girls' dormitory.

Two years later the Nicholas brothers announced their intention to finance a major building programme at M.L.C. It was to include new classrooms, gymnasium, tennis courts and Assembly Hall and additions to the school's boarding accommodation and dining hall. These grand plans were modified due to a shortage of funds, but the process of demolition led to the offer of an old building clad in asbestos-cement sheeting. Grateful for small mercies, Box Hill Grammar accepted the offer, the building was transported from M.L.C., Walker carried out renovations and it was used for twenty years as a classroom.

The war years saw an increase in the roll from 89 in 1939 to 140 in 1944. Combining hard work with ingenuity, Walker was able, by 1942, to offer places for almost seventy boarders. There were 25 places in the boarding house, 14 in the cottage, and 10 in the girls' dormitory. In 1938, Walker had bought a house "over the road" and although he continued to live in the boarding house, four girls found

49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
52. A note in the concluding pages of B.H.G.S. Roll
accommodation there with his mother-in-law and her sister. In 1941 a bungalow was built at the rear of his house and so there were four more places. In 1942 there were plans to fit out the Assembly Hall to take ten more boys, but Walker felt that the Board of Education's idea that the boys could be made comfortable through the purchase of a few bedside rugs was "not enough". Instead, with the help of a new maintenance man, he converted the Pavilion into a dormitory with ten places. Bunks were made, a hot water service and bathroom were installed and the old timber floor covered with a bitumen felt.

As had been the case with the farming activities and the concert tours, Walker realized that his "temporary" building programme resulted in educational benefits. He fired off a broadside at schools which had large boarding houses, comparing them with his scattered accommodation. "Tradition and convention", he announced, "very often are great obstacles to progress...we hear on every hand of institutions going into the cottage scheme...(of smaller accommodation units)...for the sake of the mental health of their children. But the 'better class' schools are slow to learn." "Their children," he added with some sarcasm, "do not need home life; they get it in the holidays, their children stand no risk of being institutionalized". Instead of "discipline... esprit-de-corps...(and)... partisanship", Box Hill Grammar offered "the spirit of fellowship between leader and scholar and the attitude of rest, leisure and general comfort of the individual". Walker explained that "I want the boarding houses to be homes. I do not want intense partisanship carried over from the school sports into the home life, nor do I want the leisure time of the boarders spent in competitive activities". Walker, common sense

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid.

57. Walker, C.F. "Cottages of 15 Boarders - or Houses of 60?", 4 September, 1945.
In the Christmas holidays on 1950-51 Walker organized his most ambitious scheme to provide for more students. At a total of 203, the school was over-crowded. Council gave permission to add a classroom to both ends of the Assembly Hall and paid for the materials and for some labour and supervision by professional builders. Walker admitted that he "cribed a bit". A few extra feet were added to the building and folding doors were installed: in this way a third classroom was obtained and the Health Department finally satisfied. All the carpentering and painting was done by Walker and a team of boarders. Loy Chee, a Chinese student was appointed "foreman", Evan Walker, later an architect, gained some practical experience and his sister, Anne, remembers that girls were also involved. Cecil Reddie and other progressive educators had emphasized the importance of manual labour in producing balanced personalities. Walker was an avid reader and was well aware of this thread of progressive thinking - he had no qualms in asking his boarders to work about the school, painting and repairing. Other educators may have made more of the opportunities presented by the under-developed facilities at Box Hill Grammar by incorporating subjects like woodwork into the core curriculum. Walker's knowledge of progressive ideas seemed to convince him that there was educational merit in his building programme - "it is a pleasure to see children learn by doing" - but he went no further than involving his boarders.

58. Ibid.
59. Interviews with Evan and Anne Walker. It may be of interest to record that the author has seen movie film of this project, as well as other incidents pertaining to the history of the school, filmed by Walker. The film is currently in the hands of his daughter, Frances Millar of Burwood.
60. Walker, C.F., Diary, 8 October, 1968.
The truth remains that Box Hill Grammar's accommodation was unusual, especially when compared with the capital stock at the other main Methodist schools. Wesley, as we have noted, was rebuilt during the thirties due to the generosity of the Nicholas brothers. At M.L.C. building plans of 1938 "caused great excitement" - and there was later regret that the funds provided by the Nicholases were not sufficient to build a chapel and a new Assembly Hall. Walker did what he could in far less favourable circumstances.

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If we were to judge solely on the basis of his only published work - Collected Essays on Education - Walker seems to have been remarkably unaffected by educational theory. Four of the essays contain his thoughts on migration, war, calendar reform and the church. The fifth essay, "On Education", appears equally disappointing. Froebel is quoted - "Education must not be prescriptive, mandatory; it must be patient, following" - but it is mostly a description of the animals, the farm, the vegetables, the building programme, trips, excursions, camps and concert tours.

Appearances can be deceptive. The books on Walker's library shelves and the memories of family, staff and even ex-students indicate very strongly that he was deeply influenced by the educational milieu of his time. He was well aware of the progressive thinkers and their experiments in England, the United States and Europe. In 1930, it


was clear that progressive ideas had reached Australia. By this time a number of schools, notably those of the theosophists, had attracted the attention of educators, and despite misgivings of experts like G.S. Browne that spontaneity and individual differences were neglected, "the ideas of the new education had been adopted, reformulated and translated into acceptable practice" at least at the pedagogical level in government primary schools. Walker, who had been a trainee teacher in 1916 and 1917 and had completed his Diploma of Education in 1924 could not have been unaware of these developments. He was or became aware of experimental schools and educational experiments close at hand. He knew Margaret Lyttle's work, influenced by Froebel and Montessori, with small children at Preshil: indeed, he employed one of her assistants, Miss. E. Harbison for a short time at Box Hill Grammar. Walker corresponded with J.R. Darling of Geelong Grammar who emphasized the importance of social conscience and sanctioned a course devised by J.C. Niold which involved training for citizenship. Niold and his wife, Janet, began Koornong at Warrandyte in 1939 where self-government was practised by the boarders and psycho-analytic literature was encouraged reading for the staff. Box Hill Grammar played friendly games with its pupils and the two headmasters met on a number of occasions, so that it is difficult to imagine that Walker was ignorant of Niold's ideas. Walker also met Dorothy Ross, both informally and at conferences and followed her work at


64. Interviews with John Alexander and Bill Secombe on Lyttle, see Petersen, R.C., op. cit., pp. 188-95.

65. Author has seen letter amongst Walker's papers; on Niold's course at G.G.S., see Petersen, R.C., op. cit., pp. 334-46.


67. Interview with John Alexander, Bill Secombe.
Melbourne Church of England Girls' Grammar with interest — indeed, as we shall see, Ross provided part of the inspiration for Walker's rather more limited experiments with student self-government. 68

Walker's decision to introduce co-education at Box Hill Grammar is an interesting example of his blending theoretical with practical considerations. According to his wife, Walker was convinced of the virtues of co-education as early as 1926, when in planning for what was to be a one year headmastership of Box Hill Grammar, he made a study of mixed schooling, using Bedales as his model. 69

Co-education in late nineteenth century England was generally regarded as a "ridiculous and dangerous proposal": its gradual respectability was due to the efforts of the feminist movement and progressive educationalists. 70 J.H. Badley, previously a master at Abbotsholme, founded Bedales in 1893, and accepted girls in 1898. This decision, which marked the beginning of co-education in English secondary education, resulted from five main influences. Badley had read Pestalozzi and appreciated his dictum that the school should resemble the family, was affected by Edward Carpenter's notion that each sex had characteristics of the other, was impressed by examples of co-education he had seen in Norway and had a wife who was a militant suffragette. 71 Above all, Badley believed that education should cater for individual differences, be they male or female: "is there any more difference between the normal boy and girl than between different types...of the same sex?" 72

68. Interview with John Alexander, Bill Secombe; see also pp.74-76.
69. Interview with Ethel Walker; Badley, J.H., Bedales (London, 1911).
71. Ibid., p. 141.
72. Quoted in Ibid., p. 145.
Badley proceeded to publicize his belief in co-education. His contribution to the Board of Education's "Special Reports on Educational Subjects", his chapter in Alice Wood's *Co-education* and his own *Bedales* dealt not only with criticisms of co-education but offered positive comments. To the charge that "girls can't play football", Badley questioned whether boys should, whilst pointing to the need for an expansion of games offered which would include those suitable for girls. He doubted, to paraphrase his comments, whether "rouging it" (a traditional expectation of boys) was a virtue in terms of fagging, bullying and swearing involved in the process. As for premature sexual experiences, Badley suggested that segregated education meant that both boys and girls were "unprepared to meet - or rather, only too fatally prepared to meet it ill - the time when sex-attraction asserts itself as an overwhelming impulse". Badley's experience showed that co-education had beneficial effects on both boys and girls. In an academic sense, boys learned from the girls' enthusiasm and application and in games, the girls were influenced by the boys' endeavour. Given prevailing opinion, which understated the intellectual capabilities of women, co-education and its implication of equality was seen by Badley as, on balance, more beneficial for girls - it was their eyes that needed the wider opening. In later years, the N.E.F. adopted co-education as one of its basic beliefs, but it was *Bedales* that sat on the shelves of Walker's library. Ethel Walker claims that her husband was sufficiently inspired by Badley's book to reorganize senior classes at the Oxford Street Methodist Church's Sunday school so that boys and girls studied together.

73. Ibid., pp. 146-48, 149.
74. Ibid., p. 149.
75. Ibid.,
76. Connell, W.F., op. cit., p. 271; author shown the book.
77. Interview with Ethel Walker.
There are other examples of Walker's commitment to the principle of co-education, but it must be noted that they followed the decision of 1933. He adopted mixed education in an integrated way, suggesting that he had absorbed progressive ideas that daily interaction between the sexes was important in promoting shared respect and understanding. The girls at Box Hill Grammar had separate sleeping accommodation, but meals and classes were not segregated. At recess, lunch or after school, boys and girls mixed freely, played with and against each other in tennis, cricket, hockey and softball, went on all camps and excursions together and combined their talents in singing and drama. 78

The other Methodist schools remained conventional. Wood, head of M.L.C. from 1939 to 1956, has written that he knew of "very successful co-educational schools" - he does not mention Box Hill Grammar - but his "experience of a single-sex type satisfied...him)...of its advantages". 79 One result was that contact at the school level between M.L.C. girls and members of the opposite sex was limited to interschool debates and dances and the annual performance of the Messiah. 80 Walker believed in equality and a strong impression shared by two old-girls of his school (both sensitive enough to recognize it had occurred) was the absence of sexist attitudes on the part of the boys. 81

Walker wrote strongly on co-education's advantages. In 1960 he stated that "the basis of my interest in co-education was its social value: why should boys and girls be separated in school...when co-operation between the sexes is such an important factor in adult living? I ...

78. All interviewees agree on this point. It is also interesting to note that Walker, through his son Evan, attempted to change the rules of the Saturday morning cricket competition in which the school played, in order that girls could be included in school teams. It is pertinent to note also that this was not because sport for girls was unavailable: they played in a softball competition. The attempt was unsuccessful.


80. Zaimu'ddin, A.G., op. cit., p. 378: "The sixties saw the pioneering of new opportunities for...(such)...contact..."

81. Interview with Rosemary Milne (who has recently completed a Ph.D. in Psychology) and Wendy Lowenstein.
(also) studied the question from an educational standpoint... and I was convinced that there is no reason for... segregation apart from tradition, supported by a snobbish attachment to a certain type of ... 'Public School', and I found also that the Girls' Schools... were simply trying to ape this established tradition. But why continue it? A year later, in the face of Conference's decision to revert to a school for boys only, Walker wrote that "it would take a lot of ingenuity to explain why most people agree...(with co-education). from about 4 years to about 12 years, then to tertiary mixed institutions over 17 years of age, and yet hold that there is... a widespread desire to segregate children between the ages of 12 and 17." Making use of a survey of secondary education in New South Wales published in 1958 - the "Wyndham Report" - Walker continued "that pupils and teachers, at all levels, are opposed to a separation of boys and girls at school... children from co-educational schools are better material for further education... than the products... of single sex schools." His final complaint - "so why annihilate a school that is developing along these modern lines?" - betrays the pressure he was under, but it is impossible to doubt Walker's integrity on the matter. He put his job on the line: "girls go, I go." The girls did go and Walker's regime ended before his 65th birthday.

Zainu'ddin has observed that, in general terms, co-education survived from the nineteenth century due to "economic necessity rather than conviction". In 1930, Box Hill High School opened as a school for boys and two years later the nearby Horton Girls' school closed its doors under the weight of the depression. These developments

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84. Interview with George Wilson.
served to draw attention to the neglect of girls' education in the
district. By adopting co-education it could be argued that Walker
was able to meet the demand and, at the same time, offer a clear
alternative both to the High School and Methodist single-sex schools -
he had received requests from parents of boys to accept their daughters
and so keep their children together. Walker was also concerned, by
1933 the father of four girls, to provide for his own family's edu-
cation. 87 Above all, he must have realized that girls would increase
the size of the school's roll.

In considering Walker's decision of 1933, we have indications of his
attitude towards co-education prior to the entry of girls and his
undoubted conviction at a later date. We have also noted that the
decision can be explained in pragmatic terms. We have observed that,
in relation to the concert tours and the building programme, Walker
was not a stranger to the process of using theory to support practice.
It is possible then, that he genuinely became convinced of co-educat-
ion's virtues after having introduced it for practical reasons. This
writer believes, on the balance of probabilities, that both theoretical
and practical considerations were involved when Walker decided to
open the doors of his school to girls, but is unable to decide which
of the two factors was the more powerful.

It should be recognized in conclusion, that Walker's was a brave de-
cision. It is true that co-education in the thirties was not as
shocking an idea as it had been in the past. Nor was it novel since
the Education Department offered its segregated version to the general
public. It is significant, however, to appreciate that there were

87. Ibid.
very few co-educational schools run by churches when Walker accepted girls - the Friends' School, run by the Quakers at Hobart and Huntingtower School, operated by the Christian Scientists at Malvern, are amongst the few which predated Box Hill Grammar. The Methodist church at the time had not even developed a policy on the issue.

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Apart from the introduction of co-education, Box Hill Grammar in the early thirties was a fairly conventional school. The three classrooms of the Cato block held composite classes ranging from Year 1 through to Leaving Certificate, the latter at that time satisfying the University's entrance requirements. The teaching staff of those earliest years - which included Hazel Beckett, daughter of Rev. William Beckett, and Arthur Rush, who later achieved greater fame as cricket coach at Wesley - was apparently competent, but if progressive education's ideas and techniques made an impact in the classrooms there is neither record nor memory of it. Interschool sport was played regularly against other small schools such as Essendon and Mentone Grammars and Huntingtower. Rivalry was keen and victories such as the cricket premiership of 1932, proudly noted. There were few extra-curricular activities.

No school stands still. As numbers at the school increased and more staff were hired it became possible to add a greater range of subjects and activities. Musical standards were greatly improved due


89. Interview with John Alexander.

90. Ibid.,

91. Headmaster's Report, 1940, 1941.
to the efforts of Jack Watson and Henry Taylor, competitive sport was downgraded in importance in favour of friendly games within the school and out-of-school activities, notably concert tours, became more popular. Rudimentary experiments with the Dalton plan were made by Eileen Fallon and Japanese was taught by Bill Secombe, beginning in 1938.\(^2\) In 1936, M.L.C. became the first of the Public Schools to include Japanese in the curriculum and when Secombe began instruction at the sub-intermediate level, it was taught in only a few Australian schools.\(^3\) Whilst it may appear, given the interest of progressive educators in totalitarian society and the issue of democracy, that the teaching of Japanese at Box Hill Grammar was related to educational theory, it must be acknowledged that this was not the case. Walker did not seek a teacher of the language - he simply found himself with a member of staff who happened to have that skill. Instruction in Japanese ceased when Secombe transferred to Carey in 1941.\(^4\)

Watson, Fallon, and Secombe have separately mentioned Walker's personal interest in the educational developments of the time. He was, by their testimony, an enthusiastic reader; the greatest single influence on Walker, it is claimed, was A.S. Neill. Neill founded Summerhill in 1921 in Suffolk as a co-educational boarding school. He explained that "we set out to make a school in which we should allow children to be themselves. In order to do this, we had to renounce all discipline, all direction, all suggestion, all moral training, all religious instruction."\(^5\) Summerhill was notable because Neill

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\(^2\) Interview with Eileen Fallon, Jack, Watson and Bill Secombe.

\(^3\) Zainu'ddin, A.G., op. cit., p. 229.

\(^4\) Interview with Bill Secombe.

applied psychotherapy - his "private lessons" - to troubled students "to lop off all complexes resulting from morality and fear" and be- cause of its self-government. J.C. Nield spent time at Summerhill in the early thirties: his school shared the same features. Koornong made use of two professional analysts and a weekly meeting "concerned itself with everything about the school except the personal safety of pupils which Nield took as his own responsibility". Walker, for his part, could never have embraced Summerhill's characteristics with such enthusiasm. Nield and his wife were proprietors of Koornong; Walker's school was the property of the Methodist church: specifically, education without religion at Box Hill Grammar was an impossibility. Instead Walker appears to have been attracted by Neill's advocacy of freedom in a general sense. In particular, by his own admission, Walker's early teaching career had helped make him authoritarian. At that time, the Herbartian approach, which held that the child was an imperfect adult to be filled with information and provided with an identity by parents or teachers, was popular in many educational circles and it produced teachers who stressed obedience. During his time at Box Hill Grammar, Walker, as he put it, "struggled to unlearn his authoritarianism." He was not always successful, but teachers at his school in the thirties and forties strongly suggest that the struggle was inspired by Neill.

Apart from the influence of Neill, Walker was fascinated by the N.E.F. Conference held on an Australia-wide basis in 1937. The conference and the speeches read by prominent educators from overseas seemed

97. Petersen, R.C., op. cit., p. 315.
99. Ibid.
100. See Cunningham, K.S. (ed.), Education for Complete Living (Melbourne, 1933) which is a record of the speeches.
to convince Walker that freedom and self-government were important in a social rather than therapeutic sense. Education in the past century had rarely been separated from a political purpose as, for example, the objective of producing common sentiments, attitudes and allegiances. This purpose intensified during the Great War and was stressed by the speakers to the audiences at the 1937 Conference. Hitler had come to power in Germany in 1933. Mussolini's Italian army invaded Abyssinia in 1935 and Japan was on the move in China. More than ever, it was necessary that the schools should serve democracy. Judging by Walker's later actions, the proposals of three speakers made a particular impression. Zilliacus from Norway made three suggestions: current affairs should be included in the curriculum, practical training in citizenship through pupil management, as far as was possible, in the daily life of the school was important and attention should be paid to the need of arousing a social conscience. The American, Kandel, extended this latter issue. He saw the main weakness of democracy as promoting the "cult of the individual without a corresponding feeling of social responsibility" and urged that citizens of the future be trained to react co-operatively instead of selfishly. His scheme involved the abolition of prizes and marks for schoolwork since these developed a competitive attitude. Susan Isaacs, who ran an experimental school in England in the early twenties, agreed: "I would banish the competitive spirit altogether from the serious pursuits of the mind. When competition is overdone, it often has a most adverse effect... upon what it is intended to encourage... interest in learning."

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The N.E.F. conference had important consequences. The publicity generated persuaded the Nields that the time was right to establish their school and Dorothy Ross, profoundly influenced by the N.E.F.'s aims, showed in practice that "progressive methods can really be made to work". Walker's school, in the years immediately before the war, began to show signs that its headmaster was aware of progressivist ideas. Discipline was relaxed, a measure of student government was introduced, a way found to stress current affairs and the more obvious aspects of competition were abolished.

Without exception, students from this period remember the lack of rules as a feature of Box Hill Grammar, though generally this was attributed to the absence of a real need. "We were a pretty tame lot" is a representative explanation, though there was a clear recognition that appropriate standards of behaviour were implicit and that the "Boss" was more than capable of dealing with those who overstepped the mark of sensible propriety. There is a ready recollection, too, of a casual approach towards the wearing of the school uniform, where no ties or caps for boys and slacks in cold weather for girls were tolerated. Those close to the family understood that Walker disliked uniforms—possibly due to the death of his brother, Ivan, during the Great War—and supposed that the occasional "blitzes" on dress were more than likely suggested by Walker's wife, Ethel, who was sensitive of the need to placate those in the local church who worried about such things. Discipline, if we use the narrow meaning of the word in the sense of direction and correction, was rarely strict. At the other Methodist schools, there was a far

106. Interview with Anna Alexander.
107. Interview with Anna Alexander, Wendy Lowenstein.
108. Interview with Evan Walker, John Alexander.
greater regulation of children. At Wesley, the muscular Christianity of Adamson extended into the thirties under Harold Stewart and Neil Harcourt MacNeil's regime between 1940 and 1947 has been described as "quasi-military": it was not until Wilfred Frederick became headmaster in 1947 that "all boys ... really mattered". At M.L.C. Wood was a believer in firm discipline and began each day with an assembly, "its religious opening set the tone for the day, and... its strict silence and orderliness had a beneficial effect".

Walker's treatment of his boarders seems to have been particularly relaxed. At M.L.C., though it must be recognized that its far larger house presented greater problems than those experienced at Box Hill; there was strict regimentation. Concentrated in and around the main building, the boarders of M.L.C. were obliged to complete an hour of "prep" before school began and there was an hour of compulsory sport between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. On Sundays the girls attended two church services. At Box Hill Grammar, the boarders were scattered around and even beyond the school property so that supervision was less thorough; morning "prep" was introduced only in the late fifties, afternoon sport was never organized and Walker was more casual about the attendance of his boarders at church, allowing on occasions, some of the older boys and girls to sit through shorter services at the Baptist or Presbyterian churches. At M.L.C. boarding life resembled perhaps, "a barracks in which Christian soldiers were trained", but at Box Hill, boarding life had a family atmosphere.

It could be argued that the freedom at Box Hill Grammar was related to the lack of competent teachers and inadequate supervision. During the late fifties there were, as we shall see, complaints that this was so and they have a deal of merit. During the thirties and forties, however, the strongest impressions gained by this writer as a result of interviews, is that Walker tried deliberately to foster a tone at his school consistent with progressive ideas that the child was a person striving to develop itself. Freedom involved the difficult decision to promote an atmosphere that ran counter to Walker's personality and previous teaching experience, and it was consistent with other developments within the school and at other schools.

The first opportunity to experiment with allowing the pupils a place in the school's organization occurred in 1937. Towards the end of the year, there was an outbreak of infantile paralysis in Melbourne which created minor havoc, leading to the abandonment of school sporting fixtures, plays and concerts. The annual trip to the Royal Melbourne Show was out of the question, but a conference of staff and students recommended holding their own "show" at Box Hill. Under the general supervision of the teachers, the boarders divided their activities into four parts: farming, homecraft, hobbies, and ring events. There was much excitement and feverish preparation and on 7 October the show was declared open by a speech broadcast by the school's radio station - V.K. - B.G.P. - from the pavilion to the gymnasium. The day was a great success, the only mishap being caused by one of the exhibits, a cow, which half stepped over a fence and decided to stay there. Bob Briscoe won a cake-making contest, Aiden

114. See pp. 96-103.

115. See, for example, Wesley College Minutes, 27 September, 1937 which relates some details of boys absent; football, school play and concert abandoned.
Christensen, captain of the football, cricket and athletics team, won the knitting competition and senior girls pitted their strength against the boys in a tug-of-war competition. One Methodist minister with sons at the school was rather worried in case the school decided to run its own Melbourne Cup. 116

The success of the show encouraged Walker to go further. At other Methodist schools, prefects continued to be used as a means of reward and control, and there was no students' representative council under Wood at M.L.C. and not until Frederick's time at Wesley. 117 Walker abandoned the prefect system, preferring school committees. In 1940, for example, a "Vigilance Committee" passed a number of rules, including penalties for late-comers and for bullying and specified that "bikes must not be ridden without the owner's permission". 118 At the same time, the pupils organized and operated their own tuckshop. 119 Walker was pleased with these arrangements: "we do make an effort to place as much of the responsibility for school development upon the individuals themselves and so foster the spirit of true self-government". 120 The truth was, however, that self-government at Box Hill Grammar never approached the level allowed by Neill, the Nields and Ross.

At Melbourne Church of England Girls' Grammar School, Dorothy Ross replaced a prefect system with an Executive Council of five staff members and 25 girls. 121 The process took six years and it evolved

118. B.H.G.S. Chronicle, 11 April, 1940, 20 June, 1940.
119. Interview with Wendy Lowenstein.
120. Headmaster's Report, 1941.
and developed and was not imposed. The council had the right to discuss any matters and to make suggestions but the headmistress could veto questions affecting finance, religion, the curriculum and health. Many of the activities of the school were run by elected committees and each form ran as a committee with elected office-bearers. Form mistresses were not to take the chair. "In this way the girls were given an opportunity to express through legitimate channels their ideas for the running of the school, and learnt the technique of running meetings, the tolerance of reasoned discussion and the unsuspected difficulties involved in making changes, however desirable. They also learned how to carry out an official job in a responsible and creative way." In contrast, Walker imposed a far more limited degree of self-government and while freedom of expression was encouraged amongst students, staff meetings were only rarely held and never included student representatives. Walker was, by temperament, incapable of surrendering much of the direction of his school to his students: his interest in self-government was genuine but the issue was never comprehensively examined or applied; it was tinkered with.

The relationship between education and society was a much discussed issue at the N.E.F. conference. A strong element in progressive thought was a belief in human perfectibility: progressivists, as has been noted, located man's imperfection in society's faults. Some of the precursors of progressive education, as we have seen, wanted to withdraw from society, but in this century many called for its reconstruction. The Americans, Harold Rugg and George Counts, were influential: Rugg was famous for his social studies textbooks which stressed contemporary problems and Counts, in his Dare the Schools Build a New Social Order? suggested that a truly democratic society

would "combat all forces tending to produce social distinctions and classes and repress every form of privilege and economic parasitism".\textsuperscript{123} Rugg was branded as a communist and Counts did not persist with the opinion quoted above: the importance of the men lies rather in their insistence that controversial issues be discussed in classrooms so that sound judgements, important in a democracy, could be made. Walker's response was hampered because there was no group of pupils whose parents were prepared to accept a modified course, as was the case at the larger Geelong Grammar and there was the constraint of set subjects leading to public examination.\textsuperscript{124} Walker kept magazines listing statistics of progress in the U.S.S.R. available in his library and recommended the \textit{Christian Science Monitor} as essential reading for those interested in foreign affairs.\textsuperscript{125} He was fortunate, too, in having an approachable staff to whom pupils could readily turn for discussion at lunch or recess times. In particular, as has been suggested, there are strong memories of the role played by Rupert Brunning as sympathetic listener and mentor. On a more formal level, Walker conducted a programme outside school hours, so that it was the boarders who were involved. On most Sundays from the late thirties to the early fifties, Bible Study classes were held. Invariably, they became discussions of international relations. British rule in Palestine and India, the Japanese invasion of China and the approach of war in Europe provoked lively interest as did the role of the United Nations in post-war reconstruction.\textsuperscript{126} Eventually, however,  

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\textsuperscript{123} Connell, W.F., \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 231-83, 239-90.
\textsuperscript{125} Interviews with Evan Walker, Rosemary Milne.
\textsuperscript{126} Bible Study Notebook, passim.
\end{flushright}
Walker abandoned this programme under pressure from the local church and school council which insisted that pupils attend a more conventional study of the Bible at Oxford Street on Sunday afternoons. As was the case with self-government, Walker never developed a comprehensive approach to current affairs: his own interest found expression in Bible Study lessons and a devotion to the cause of the United Nations, but the relationship between controversial issues and class lessons at Box Hill Grammar remained haphazard.

Walker's most successful and enduring innovation relating to pupil freedom involved his attempts to abolish competition. Co-operation freed the individual from selfishness which, as General Smuts put it, was "the grand refusal and denial of life". Sport should involve everyone and be non-competitive, but it was not possible, because of pupil and parent expectations, to completely withdraw from interschool competitions. "A certain amount of interest attaches to these contests", explained Walker (who was scarcely able to conceal his delight with a Box Hill Grammar victory), "but the great part of our...interest and energies is devoted to games within the school".

Walker argued that high-grade performances could be left to develop as students joined clubs after leaving school. The feature of sport developed by Walker with the assistance of the gymnastics teacher, Alf Lorbach, in the late thirties was the "Kampf contest", though, of course, the name was altered to "octagonal contest" after war began. These were standard achievement tests.

127. B.H.G.S. Council Minutes, 3 August, 1955: "There should be compulsory attendance at...the Box Hill church each Sunday". Walker dissented from this ruling.
ran 100 yards, dived and worked out on mats, parallel bars, horizontal bars or Roman rings. Girls and younger boys had a pentagonal contest. Results were recorded on a large chart by Brunning, and the sole objective was personal improvement. All competitors received ribbons, Walker observing that in sport only the best runner wins a prize, but in Christian life all those who do their best are rewarded. In describing the advantages of the scheme, Walker claimed that "it is noticeable that even the shyest boy or girl can enjoy such an athletic contest, while the most virile can find plenty to call forth effort". "We may lose something of the excitement of competitive races", he said, "but we gain considerably in the benefits resulting from universal participation in healthy exercises. We have also gained most noticeably in the attendance of the parents, and in the absence of rancour". Brian Hone, headmaster of Melbourne Grammar stated in 1946 that competition in interschool sport was a matter of deep concern: "it has become one of the duties of a headmaster to restrain the inflamed and misguided enthusiasms of old boys ... (the) ... press, and the misguided ambitions of parents".

The annual speech nights were public expressions of the school's philosophy. In the thirties, such nights were conventional: prizes for sporting and academic excellence were awarded, the headmaster gave his reports and visiting speakers spoke on suitable subjects. Walker realized that such a format had lost its relevance and the nature of speech nights changed. A maximum number of children should participate. Soon there were few speeches and much action and the

131. Walker, C.F., "What Does Christianity Mean to us?" Sermon notes.
133. Ibid.
134. Hone, B.W. "Competition or Co-operation", Minutes of the Sixth Triennial Meeting of the Headmaster's Conference of Australia (1946), p. 64.
community was shown as many items of singing, solo instrumental work, folk dancing and gymnastics as possible.  

Box Hill Grammar's speech nights were not only informal, they seemed of interminable length. Apart from the items, every student was awarded a certificate. Just as Dorothy Ross said that "it would be inconsistent with our fundamental principles to offer material rewards", Walker abandoned the giving of prizes in the early war years. Nor were there marks or percentages. "We do not think", he explained, "that competition as a motive has social value, for it can only succeed in setting one person against another, and we do not think that children should be reared in such an atmosphere... Rather do we endeavour to foster in every way the spirit of co-operation between students, and between students and teachers".

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The aim of this chapter has been two-fold. Most important, in terms of the stated aim of this thesis, has been the attention directed towards many of Box Hill Grammar's unusual features. At the same time, an attempt has been made to classify these features in order to demonstrate that Walker was influenced in their implementation by considerations which ranged from the practical to the theoretical. The fact that Walker wrote so little about the ideas of progressive education, especially in the first hectic decade, does not of itself, invalidate the claim made by former teachers of the time that "modern" influences were at work. It is rather the degree to which they were important which must remain unknown.

135. Interview with John and Anna Alexander, Ethel Walker.
CHAPTER FOUR

A NON-ACADEMIC SCHOOL

The circumstances described in Chapter Two blended with Walker's conviction that "social development is of greater importance than academic successes" to produce a school which approached the curriculum in a particular way. At Box Hill Grammar, especially from the forties onwards, emphasis was given to those experiences which Walker considered were of value in promoting character. Success at examinations was low in order of his priorities: Box Hill Grammar was not an academic school.

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Although by training a teacher of academic subjects, Walker devoted much of his energy towards developing and maintaining the wider curriculum. As a young man, Walker enjoyed sport. From all accounts he was vigorous rather than skilful; a scar on his upper lip, the result of a disagreement during the game of lacrosse, confirmed contemporary opinion. There are memories, too, of his allowing senior boys and girls to miss classes so that they could watch Bradman bat at the Melbourne Cricket Ground in 1939 and his diaries, circulated to members of his family and friends during retirement, carefully listed football and cricket scores.

There was, of course, a contradiction between Walker's lifelong interest in competitive sport and his attitude that schoolboys and girls should not be rivals. The contradiction was less than might be imagined. Some sports, he argued, involved a contest and when involved adults produced a spectacle to be enjoyed: at school, competition should be minimized so that games became social in nature, serving to absorb energies and promoting co-operation.

2. Interview with John Alexander, Evan Walker.
Walker's emphasis on non-competitive sport had a more positive side. It was accompanied by gymnastics. In 1931, Alfred Lorbach joined the teaching staff on a part-time basis and the appointment was proved to be significant. Walker liked Lorbach and was much pleased with his work. At the 1939 Speech Night, Walker said that "our school has reached a very high standard of physical education under the capable and inspired leadership of Mr. Alfred Lorbach. Mr. Lorbach has made a special study, both overseas and in Australia, of physical culture for boys and girls. He imparts to his work a fine spirit of enthusiasm, coupled with inimitable personal skill, and as a result, great progress is made by scholars". 4

Walker's lavish praise, intended basically to impress parents, was accurate. Lorbach's gymnastic background was impeccable. His father was well regarded in Melbourne's German community as an instructor in drill. 5 Ernst Lorbach taught at the Club Tivoli and later branched out for himself, opening a gymnasium in Spring Street. It was from this base that Ernst and his students spread their skills, offering to teach at schools wishing to include physical education in their curriculums. Alfred was part of this system. During the thirties, apart from instructing in practical gymnastics at the University of Melbourne under the direction of Dr. Fritz Duras, he taught at Mentone, Geelong and Camberwell Grammars, Carey, and interestingly, at Koornong. 6

This latter appointment at what was undeniably a progressive school invites further comment. In the twenties, creative self-expression - art, poetry, drama, eurhythmics and free dancing - became an important aspect of progressive education. Such self-expression concentrated on what was seen or felt, rather than on "reproducing the demands

5. Interview with Doreen Lorbach.
6. Ibid.
of the intellect" and its importance can be seen in the career of Isadora Duncan, and closer to home, in the style of education offered at St. Margaret's at Devonport.

In 1933 Lorbach had attended gymnastic festivals in Germany. The experience confirmed his dislike of National Socialism, but more importantly, he learnt of a new type of exercise based on flowing rather than rigid movements. The new gymnastics emphasized body waves, relaxing and stretching, and was influenced more by dance than by military drill. On his return to Melbourne, Lorbach put these principles into practice at the schools he visited and kept his knowledge current by subscribing to Tus, the magazine of German gymnastics. The result was that the pupils of Box Hill Grammar were amongst the first in Australia to benefit from this new view of bodily health. Walker was too astute to let the opportunity pass by and so, in contrast with classes at Mentone and Geelong Grammars which were optional, all pupils were involved. Because of this, Lorbach and his wife Doreen introduced remedial physical education exercises designed to strengthen the feet and legs. From 1941 a local doctor held medical examinations in connection with the Lorbachs' work. Alf joined the R.A.A.F. in 1942 but Doreen continued on with his methods until the late forties.

Games had always been understood as important in the formation of character. The "old" gymnastics, taught at most schools in the thirties was essentially military drill implying obedience and conformity. The "new" gymnastics which Lorbach introduced was closer to play, which as Froebel had it, was "the outward expression of an inner necessity and impulse". So, in capable hands, physical education meant freedom and led to situations where character could be developed.

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8. Interview with Doreen Lorbach.
9. Ibid.
Walker kept a copy of Edgar W. Herbert's *Re-education Through Self Activity* and marked a passage:

"Come let the educational agencies come to understand the nature of play, and learn how to use it and work through its spirit, there will be undreamt of success and progress: normal biological and psychological tendencies will assert themselves. Schools will achieve real education. Churches will more fully meet spiritual needs .... Work will be lifted in purpose and dignity, its slave characteristics transmuted, its soul destructiveness changed to creativeness. Sport will be cleansed, sex will be sane and wholesome, homes be joyful, crime will be curbed if not cured, communities become cultural centres, states be stabilized and life be worth living; while that much overworked word 'freedom' will be so real that it will not have to be fought for, because in a world based on the science, philosophy and art ... (of) ... play, personal conflicts, class struggles and international wars will cease to be". 11

Brave words, but the appeal was obvious to a man who saw his educational mission in the widest terms.

Music and Art were other subjects which most schools saw as being on the fringes of the academic curriculum that Walker saw as important. He had little artistic ability but was shrewd enough to realize that Art served a useful purpose in tempering Box Hill Grammar's relatively uncultivated environment. His attitude towards the subject can be seen when its continuation was threatened by the resignation of its teacher during 1941 - Walker arranged for the school's Art classes to receive instruction at nearby Ormiston Girls' School. 12

11. Typed manuscript, with this passage underlined, found amongst Walker's personal papers.

12. Interview with Wendy Lowenstein.
was also important in the life of the school. Methodism was born in song and as a young man, Walker sang around the piano and joined the church choir. His voice, so it seems, lacked quality, but it was in pitch and loud. He was determined that his own children should learn music, lessons were paid for, and the school found itself with a nucleus, other interested children included, of reasonably gifted young musicians. In 1937 Henry Taylor was appointed singing master. Taylor was also in charge of a small orchestra - he taught piano and visiting teachers provided instruction in the violin and flute. Walker appreciated Taylor's efforts, describing him as a master who "produced excellent choral and orchestral work". Every boy and girl in the school received musical training. Walker was pleased that "the voices of children have undergone a change in purity and musical quality". The choir was never as grand as those found at M.L.C. or Scotch, but it had a wide repertoire (which included Handel, German, Schubert and Wagner) was the backbone of the concert tours to the country and, in 1940, sang over radio stations 3XY and 3DB. In the same year the school produced recordings of Brian Williams's singing, with Selwyn Hooper as accompanist. In the years that followed, Box Hill Grammar's interest in music continued. Music teachers, such as Mrs. Newbury visited the school, and musically gifted members of staff, notably Bill Chappel and Stan Adams, helped maintain standards and contributed their skills in performances.

13. Interview with Kath Beanland (daughter of Walker), Jack Watson.
15. Ibid.
16. Interview with John Alexander; Headmaster's Report, 1940.
17. Interview with Jean Provan.
18. Interview with Jean, Provan, Evan Walker and Trevor Boucher.
Both Walker and Brunning saw value in excursions. Trips were organized regularly throughout Walker's term as headmaster as adjuncts to classroom study, usually by van or motor car, though during the war petrol shortages forced greater reliance on walking and public transport. Boys and girls from Box Hill Grammar visited factories, inspected the countryside around Whittlesea, the open cut at Yallourn and the Maroondah Dam at Healesville or simply enjoyed themselves in the snow at Warburton and Mount Donna Buang. There was more than one hike through the Lederderg Gorge. In 1940, for example, a party from the school was accompanied by old boys and girls. The hike was to be five miles, but it seemed to most that ten miles were covered, and a half a dozen of the group, including Walker, were temporarily lost en route. In the afternoon, "the boys stood by and watched" as Walker and Brunning "cut down several trees, split them, and carried them to the side of the road in order to help a one-legged woodcutter". Excursions, Walker later wrote, clearly not with this one in mind, had another purpose: "creativeness, inventiveness and generosity in the child's character... (take) ... the place of receptiveness, greed and selfishness".

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Walker never accepted that a school's curriculum was limited to academic subjects and sport alone. It was usual, after the war, to take a party of children and teachers on an extended trip, these replacing the old concert tours, now that the school numbers were healthy and the need for self advertisement in the country districts had

19. Walker, C.F., Collected Essays, p. 25
20. Ibid., p. 22.
declined. One such example was the tour of Norfolk Island in late August and early September 1951, chosen because the island's Administrator, Alexander Wilson, was the father of previous students. The party of 26 attended dances and parties, gave concerts, participated in church services, visited the sights and was entertained at government house. During the return flight from Sydney to Melbourne Walker gave an impromptu geography lesson: from the air the Hume Reservoir could be clearly seen, there were billabongs and meanders to be noticed in several rivers and "the effects of straight ploughing in causing erosion was observed". Other tours went to the Barrier Reef, Tasmania and Central Australia, the latter being a family affair as Walker's older son, Evan, went along as did Vera Meier's husband and young daughter.

The feeling of belonging which the trips enhanced and the trust Walker had in his pupils are also evident in the annual camp held during the Christmas holidays - a time when most schoolmasters could perhaps be forgiven for seeking peace away from their students. Not Walker. His enthusiasm for camping holidays at the beach had begun as a young lad with his parents, and from the early twenties until 1962 he organized camps during December, at first for his students at Scotch and his Sunday School classes, and later for Box Hill Grammar. Until 1954, when the camps moved to Balnarring, the favourite sites were McCrae and Rosebud. Mrs. Walker was responsible for most of the preparations because her husband was busy, at that time of the year, with speech night. She would "get a few boxes, even months ahead, and when you think of something, just drop it in".

23. Walker, C.F., Norfolk Island Diary, passim.
24. Interviews with Vera Meier, Barbara Ball, Evan Walker.
26. Interview with Ethel Walker.
Most of the food, except milk, bread and meat, was taken down to the beach. Tins of jam, vegemite, large jars of beetroot, cases of lettuce, tomatoes, oranges and apples and a sack of potatoes were packed onto a truck hired for the trip. Also included were tents, blankets, stretchers, lamps, two army tables with seats, a fly-proof safe, and ice chest with a bread cutter attached to its top, kerosine tins and a stove. The main tent, known as the "circus tent" because of its frill between the roof and sides, had been purchased by Walker about 1940 and had seen service during the Boer War when it was used as a post office. A trailer was attached to Walker's car; it transported what was found impossible to fit into the van and a rowing boat dubbed the "Queen Mary", known by those who had been before as quite a hazard at sea.27

The circus tent was the camp's focal point. Supplies were stored there, meals were cooked with the aid of water carried from taps in kerosine tins and at night it was a gathering place for those who wanted to play cards, sing or read. Surrounding the circus tent were smaller tents where the campers from Box Hill slept: some of this accommodation was provided by friends and relations of the Walkers who would join the party after most of the children returned home.28

Some of the children stayed on: boys like Roy who came from a broken home and Lee, whose parents in Rabaul could only afford to see him every second year. They became, as a result of the Walker's generosity, part of a closer family during the holidays.29

As many as sixty students thoroughly enjoyed themselves with the simple pleasures of an informal community life. All were rostered by the ever-present Rupert Brunning to help in tasks around the camp

27. Interview with Evan Walker, Trevor Boucher.
28. Interview with Jean Provan.
29. Ibid. Note that pseudonyms are used when appropriate.
like fetching water and washing dishes, but there was ample time for ball games, sing-songs by a fire on the beach, swimming and rowing the "Queen Mary" close to the shore. Groups of students set off to the back beaches, to the Cape Schank lighthouse, climbed the "steps" at Dromana or walked up to Arthur's Seat. They fished, saw films like "Sunset Boulevard", discovered a seal washed up on the beach, suffered from sunburn, sewed up each other's pyjamas and were the actors and actresses in home movies which Walker took of their fun.10 Perhaps they learnt, as Walker would have hoped as he relaxed, a large figure in a deckchair, that life's pleasures were rarely solitary experiences.

Walker was renewed and refreshed by these camps, though his wife simply swapped a gas stove for a kerosine burner. The Walker children loved every moment, relishing the gregarious side of their father's character. They even enjoyed packing up, for when they returned home, the blankets would be aired on tables in such a way that "cubby houses" with secret rooms and dark passage ways could be constructed and played in.11

All the camps were great fun, though, in retrospect, one in particular was perhaps unwise. In 1939 the students and staff joined with 1,500 others "of all ages ranging from five weeks to over 70 years" in a Workers' Sports Federation Camp at Cowes. Walker enjoyed himself: he helped with a meal tent and his party "had a lovely time - swimming, participating in the Workers' sports, and in taking interesting drives in our 'Studie' around the island". At night, "you could sit outside your tent (like Abraham) in the cool of the evening and... join in the entertainment" which consisted of music and speeches on war.

10. Ibid.

politics and international affairs, broadcast by loud speakers from
the "Peoples' Marquee". The camp was organized by communists. On
his return home, Walker was congratulated by the Mayor of Box Hill
for helping to run the camp, clearly an exaggeration, but evidence
of the fact that Box Hill Grammar had been linked with what, in the
minds of most Australians, was an extremist and foreign political
party. 32 Walker wrote that "no-one branded me as a Communist because
I helped", but even if this was so, there can be little doubt that
reputations were tarnished. 33

A feature of the school which attracted considerable attention had
its origins in the late forties when Miss Jill Tunbridge asked Walker
"if she could have a few ponies at the school to teach riding". 34
Walker agreed: he saw the horses as adding interest to the school's
life, knew that some students would find comfort and pleasure in caring
for and riding the animals and, with the declining number of cows,
was quite thankful to have assistance in keeping the grass in the
far south-western corner of the property under control. For a small
fee, Miss Tunbridge gave lessons to both boys and girls. She was
stern and possessed a commanding voice - it was said that the mere
contemplation of mischief was met with a tongue-lashing. 35 Miss
Tunbridge was partly responsible for the school's "horsey" reputation
- several successful gymkhanas were held in the fifties - but her
use of the old dairy and cowsheds as headquarters scarcely justified
the fanciful description of "Academy" which she used to describe her
operations. 36 By the mid fifties, plans for the school oval reduced

33. Ibid.
35. Interview with Rosemary Dalton, student of B.H.G.S., 1952-55, who kept in con-
tact with Tunbridge after her school days.
36. Interview with George Wilson.
available space and Miss Tunbridge removed her academy to Croydon. 37

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It has not been the intention to suggest that Box Hill Grammar was alone in promoting a range of activities outside the academic curriculum, though as far as can be judged from reading published school histories, the annual Christmas camp, early gymnastics under Lorbach and his wife, and Miss Tunbridge's horse riding lessons were unusual. Other schools, progressive and conventional, were also concerned to develop the creative aspects of education. Koornong, for example, offered a range which included puppetry, weaving and metal and wood turning, sometimes with the assistance of instruction by local tradesmen 38. At M.L.C. by 1944, the girls had a choice of nine extracurricular activities including war work and social service, a Debating club and a Walking club. 39 At progressive schools such activities were regarded as of equal value to academic subjects: an important aspect of a total approach which took education to be more than scholarship. At conventional schools they were regarded as enrichment and had a lower status than the academic programme. Walker thought that his children would be better served by greater emphasis on activities than on academic progress. Activities outside the classroom involved what he described as "projects".

The key to Walker's understanding on this crucial matter is to be found in his involvement with a small group of people who described their organization as the Character Education Inquiry. In July, 1944, Walker became a foundation member and chairman of the group whose other members were laymen of the church interested in youth work. 40

37. Walker, C.F., "School Records".
40. Minute Book of Character Education Inquiry, 7 July, 1944.
The Inquiry aimed "to conduct studies in character education, endeavouring to discover the nature of character, and the process of its formation" and "to observe and record results and conclusions". At a Conference at Ballarat in 1946, desirable traits of character were defined as those leading to "right living": assistance to one's fellow man, a feeling of responsibility for community projects, a desire to take part in world activities and good personal living. Minor virtues included courtesy, persistence, industry, dependability and co-operation in sharing. Members of the Inquiry believed that although character was "built on the pattern of early childhood", it could be changed or improved "as the result of intense emotional experience, or a succession of lesser emotional but repeated experiences". Such a method of character education had its obvious shortcomings in practice: few teachers could pretend to have the capacity to induce a state of dramatic mental agitation. Realizing this, Walker studied programmes which were less emotional, but which offered "repeated experiences". There was much to choose from. Herbart, for example, had the development of character central to his theories and suggested that appropriate training consisted of religious and secular history and literature. The English public schools aimed to provide "that education which trains a generation through religion and discipline, through culture of the mind and perfection of the body, to a conscious end of service to the community". Walker may have considered that the Herbartian approach already applied at Box Hill Grammar and had little liking for the tradition, snobbery and emphasis on competitive sport found in the public schools. He looked further and was attracted

41. Ibid.
42. Ibid., 17 May, 1946.
43. Ibid, 4 August, 1944.
by the Detroit Programme of Character Education, the Charters Plan of Religious Education and the Iowa Plan of Character Education. The Detroit Programme was designed to present school children with problems (written in story form) which they might meet in life, and then discussions were held to decide on appropriate responses. The Charters Plan was similar in its case study approach, but raised problems of a specifically religious nature. The Iowa plan was based on a complete re-organization of the total school curriculum so that character education, rather than specific subjects, was the basis of study. Walker realized that the direct transfer of any of these American schemes to his school would involve difficulties, including the problem of adapting material to suit local needs and the fact that the Victorian schools had little flexibility, given inspection and examination requirements, within which to introduce new studies. His approach was to try to employ staff who liked children: they could be expected to assist and direct discussion as the opportunities arose, much in the manner of their informal help in current affairs. Financial problems, as has been observed, meant that Walker more often than not employed his staff on the basis of economy. Even so, interviews with former staff members and students suggest that many of Box Hill Grammar's teachers, if not academically gifted, had a sense of social obligation, were aware of the plight of others and were moved by that knowledge. Amongst them were Rupert Brunning who was much loved, Jean Hudgson, Anton Vroland, Phyllis Radford and Vera Meier. Walker's search for the best method of teaching character found its answer as he prepared notes for a sermon on "What Shall We Teach". Normal instruction becomes dogmatic - "we have doctrines to impart.

we have knowledge to give: we have stories to tell!" Lessons of this type do not develop character. The solution was deceptively simple. A project must be undertaken, perhaps a hike, a dance, a camp, or preparation for a play, concert or speech night. "When you start to get people keen on working hard at a project", Walker observed, "then you also strike petty jealousies, angry situations ... and you have to help youngsters - and yourself too - over these difficulties". Schools should offer as wide a range as possible of activities of a collectivist nature: their planning and execution would involve situations which would enhance character. This was the aim and purpose of education.

There was little that was novel in Walker's scheme: the Outward Bound movement and Geelong Grammar's Timbertop are better known examples of a similar view. As a young man Walker's nature and the influence of Christian socialism had enabled him to identify the features of his Utopian society as an absence of war, greed, competition and tradition, and a strengthening of the family. He was, by the mid forties, not simply convinced of the virtue of a social rather than individual morality, he was concerned with the means by which the good life could be reached. It was a view of education that sat easily with him. "Good conduct ... could be taught, and ... good character in the individual pupil should be the main objective in the mind of the educator". "The community would be a better place", Walker declared with more enthusiasm than concern for definition, if we "extend socialism, in its true sense of friendship, of concern for public and individual welfare, throughout our schools... (and)

48. Walker, C.F., "Character Education Inquiry....".
50. Walker, C.F., "Character Education Inquiry...."
Indeed, the whole world stood to benefit. In later years, Walker was able to blend his interest in the United Nations with his concern for education. He suggested at a meeting of the eastern suburban branch of the United Nations that U.N.E.S.C.O. should gather information on the comparative emphasis placed on character training in such countries as the U.S.A., Canada, England, France, Germany, the U.S.S.R., China and Japan.  

Walker's view of character education and the means by which it could be taught affected the senior school's academic standards.

How can academic standards be measured with real certainty? One approach is to consider examination results. Box Hill Grammar's pass rates at external examinations during the fifties do not appear impressive. Only 42.5 per cent of its students passed the Intermediate examination, 69 per cent gained the Leaving Certificate and 45 per cent were successful at Matriculation. Walker knew that the results were poor: he devised his own measure of examination success and insisted that it was the "fairest method". This was his "subject percentage", calculated by multiplying the number of candidates by the number of subjects required to pass the examination and comparing this with the total subjects actually passed. To illustrate: between 1951 and 1960 Box Hill Grammar presented 120 Intermediate candidates and since six subjects were required for a pass, Walker calculated that 720 passes were necessary. He was able to claim a success rate for his school of 75.4 per cent - the subject percentage - because his students passed 543 subjects. Using the same methodology, Walker

52. Walker, C.F., "Character Education Inquiry..."
53. Walker, C.F., "School Records"
54. Ibid.
was able to inflate the success rate of his Leaving classes to 109 per cent and for the Matriculation, it became 70 per cent. The raw statistics and Walker's manipulation of them are strong evidence of academic mediocrity.

Examination results can be regarded as a measurement of many variables. Box Hill Grammar's academic standing was not well served by the quality of some of its students or of its resources. Even after the new buildings were erected, conditions were poor: one student complained in a letter to council that Physics classes had to be conducted in a store room. In the fifties and early sixties there are strong indications that much of the teaching at the senior level was mediocre. There were teachers reputed to have progressed no further in their methods than having students underline passages in textbooks or who refused to mark essays, justifying such neglect by claiming that whilst it was important to practise writing it was quite unimportant to practise correction. Some classes were disrupted, it appears, on Fridays and Mondays for these were days to contemplate and reflect on Saturday's race meeting results. There was a general feeling amongst senior students that their chances of success depended on extremely hard work with virtually no guidance and some resentment that many were denied access to the University because of poor teaching.

It is difficult to evaluate this testimony that teaching standards were generally poor. It is hard to be objective when assessing competence and the recollections of former students may have been

55. Letter of Peter Stokes found in Walker's personal papers, undated but c.1961.

56. Interviews with Gordon Jacobs who attended B.H.G.S. 1948-58, son of a member of council, now a solicitor; Ross Baring 1945-56, solicitor; Terri Cereni, 1955-59, valuer; Perry Larsen, 1948-56 salesman and later a member of the school council; Frances Millar.
based on a lack of knowledge or been formed or coloured by unrelated events at the time or since. Nonetheless, it is probable that the former students were accurate with their criticisms for three reasons. In the first place, the readiness with which observations were made damaging to the school's reputation stands in marked contrast to equally open professions of loyalty to Walker. Secondly, the criticisms were made by all former students interviewed who attended the school at that time. Finally, they are consistent with poor examination results, difficulties of attracting and retaining staff, and Walker's policy of using inexperienced teachers at senior levels where it was assumed there would be fewer disciplinary problems.

As a teacher of senior classes, Walker was not amongst the mediocre or incompetent. He always took a full teaching load because the school could never afford a full-time administrator: besides, Walker found office routine irksome and genuinely preferred to be close to children. *Walker's humanity was hidden from perhaps too many pupils by his size, status and temperament: those students mature enough to forgive his foibles, close enough to understand the pressures under which he worked and perceptive enough to recognize bluff when they saw it gained most from his classes. Walker was at his best with English. His literary heroes included Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth and Tolstoy, the latter inspiring such devotion that later in life, for a brief period of time, he was given to rising early and experimenting with a diet of eggs.* Walker's thesis was entitled "The Bible as Literature", but this did not imply a rejection of its moral or ethical percepts. Jesus was the great teacher. "Never man thought and felt as truly and as intensely as this man..." he wrote,

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57. Interview with Jean Provan, Ethel Walker.
58. Interview with Evan Walker.
"and never man spoke as he did". "It is probable", Walker explained, "that Jesus spoke in the Aramaic dialect ...(which was)....full of native poetry, and it is natural that our Lord, speaking to people in whom poetry was bred and fostered as oratory in the Greek, should employ these devices ...(such as antithetic parallelism)....so familiar to their ears".59 Walker's conviction in the virtue of literature was combined with an ability to recite well - there are memories of his reading with such warmth and feeling that children sobbed when he finished. One former pupil attributes her love of the language to Walker's teaching, but remembers there were intangible lessons to be learnt. Her previous education at a state primary school had convinced her that knowledge was a matter of power, something that brought benefits such as recognition and prestige. Walker's English classes and their collective experiences and discussion taught her instead that knowledge was something to be shared and ideas were to be delighted in together.60

Rupert Brunning also took classes at the senior level. Never a strong disciplinarian, his Science and Geography classes were sometimes noisy but usually methodical, for Brunning was a man of careful planning and habits. The man was extremely popular: younger boys and girls followed him about the schoolyard, tugging at his coat and plying him with questions and older students found him a ready listener, sometimes extending their discussions of personal problems and political issues into weekend visits to Brunning's home in Caulfield. The cruel truth was, however, that the inadequacies of his command of senior Physics and Chemistry were exposed when the school offered students for the University's entrance examinations after not doing

60. Interview with Rosemary Milne.
so for a decade in 1956. By this time, also, Brunning was slowly dying of cancer: he could cope with the demands of junior classes but the demands and worries of senior work were beyond him.

To mention the weaknesses of some of the teachers who took senior classes during the last 15 years of his headmastership does not of itself establish the claim that Walker neglected the academic aspect of the school’s programme in favour of activities. That Walker allowed the situation to continue despite complaints is more significant. Other schools, as their histories indicate, managed to attract effective teachers. There is, as well, ample evidence to support the claim made by some unhappy parents and ex-students that Walker failed to establish an atmosphere appropriate to the promotion of scholarship.

By the end of his headmastership, the activities which he had seen as fundamental positively interfered with academic progress. Classes seemed always to be interrupted as students went off to speech lessons, music practice and riding instruction, or prepared for concerts, plays or speech nights. One former teacher of the late fifties and early sixties recalled that Walker was unable or unwilling to produce a working timetable until well into the year and allowed attendance at class to be negotiable. Another teacher, whose evidence may well be clouded by the fact that he became embroiled in a court-case involving his dismissal, has claimed that on one occasion he arrived at school to find dead and dying pigeons on the main drive, presumably shot by boys with pea rifles. It is generally claimed that Walker should have imposed a tighter discipline.

One is tempted to suggest that, utterly sure of the rectitude of his

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61. Interview with Frances Millar, Gordon Jacobs.

62. Interview with George Wilson.

63. Interview with Bruce Fisher, member of staff, 1959-63.
view of education's objectives, Walker scarcely noticed as conditions, particularly at the senior level of his school became increasingly chaotic. It appears that when the issue of academic standards was raised, Walker did little more than reinterpret examination results. He thought, according to his son, Evan, that students at the senior levels should struggle with their studies and learn to cope with difficulties - such a process involved not only scholarship but also character development. 64

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It would be wrong to apply this picture of standards over the final decade of Walker's headmastership to the whole school over thirty five years. Interviews with former students and teachers suggest that most of the shortcomings were confined to classes which sat for public examinations from the early fifties onwards. Below Year 9 there was more opportunity for imaginative teaching and it was there that the majority of Box Hill Grammar's students were to be found.

As a teacher at the junior secondary level, Walker did not lack insight. On one occasion he recognized that a boy in his History class lacked academic ability but was proficient in drawing. Walker solved the problems of lack of esteem and poor resources by having the lad paint the walls of the classroom with maps. 65 Walker was also genuinely fascinated by the possibility of motion pictures. In 1930, a committee had been created by the Victorian Education Department to consider the value of visual aids in schools. Its report, that "the film in the hands of an expert teacher was... (a) ... powerful educational weapon" led to the formation of the State

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64. Interview with Evan Walker. It is interesting to note that Ross Baring considers that conditions in the senior school were a good preparation for later studies.

65. Interview with Rosemary Milne, Wendy Lowenstein.
Film Centre in 1947. 66 In the years that followed Walker gave one of his senior boys or girls the responsibility for the choice, collection and return of films which were shown every Friday morning after Assembly. 67

The N.E.F. Conference in 1937, though concerned mainly with the relationship between education and democracy, also publicized teaching techniques such as the Dalton and Winnetka plans and the Decroly and Project methods. 68 It was the Dalton plan, developed by the American, Helen Parkhurst, in 1920, which attracted most interest. Beatrice Ensor, one of the founders of the N.E.F., claimed that what Montessori did for the young, Parkhurst did for older children and adolescents.

"With a rich environment and proper guidance, a child can learn for himself more thoroughly and more quickly than he could be taught in a rigid classroom system. 69 Ideally, monthly assignments were set in each subject, the school was converted from form rooms to subject rooms and the teachers gave advice, helped over difficulties, suggested new lines of approach and corrected completed work. The plan suited the slow learner who could complete easier work and devote more time to the difficult, while the quick learner was provided with the opportunity to undertake detailed research. Parkhurst described the principles of her plan as "freedom" and "interaction of group life" and so it was natural that Walker encouraged Eileen Fallon in 1938 when she applied the method to her English and History classes. 70

It must be admitted that Box Hill Grammar's experiment was not novel.

66. Tunney, C., op. cit., p. 68.
67. Interview with Trevor Boucher, Rosemary Milne.
since progressive Australian teachers had applied the Dalton plan at the Faraday Street school in Carlton in 1922, and it was introduced into a number of private schools, notably Trinity Grammar under Frank Shann between 1923 and 1927. It appears as well that the Box Hill Grammar experiment, which continued into the war years, was limited since the plan did not involve all subjects, rooms were not re-organized, resources were poor and some later teachers, D.B. Coutts for example, felt uncomfortable with its emphasis on child-centred activity.

The Dalton plan experiment was, nonetheless, important at Box Hill Grammar since it was indicative of where Walker's concerns lay: with his younger children and especially those with learning difficulties. Older children were more capable, he assumed, of looking after themselves. This feature of the school can also be seen in the school's approach to remedial teaching. Before the war, Box Hill Grammar was small, problems could be readily identified and assistance was given on a personal basis. After the war numbers rose from 134 in 1945 to 203 in 1950 and Walker was fortunate to obtain the services of Anton Vroland in 1947. Secretary of the Victorian branch of the N.E.F. between 1936 and 1955, Vroland was especially interested in the needs of less-able students. Indeed, he wrote that "every child was in one sense a problem child and each had one great problem of fitting himself into society. And is not our society itself a problem society?" Vroland taught in the primary section of the school.

In teaching Arithmetic he used the Cuisenaire method and armed with rods of different colours and lengths, his classes spent much time in the schoolgrounds checking and formulating rules and principles.

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74. Interview with Anna Walker.
Nature study was based almost entirely on observation. Vroland believed that a child led to discover would forget whether he or she was learning and would absorb knowledge unconsciously and with little fatigue. Walker, had he absorbed the ideals of progressive education, may have attempted to apply the techniques that Vroland demonstrated across the whole of the primary section of Box Hill Grammar. Instead, he was selective: they were used only for remedial classes.

At M.L.C., Wood wrote in his annual report of 1951 that "we should... call a halt to the frequent pleadings for the needs of slower pupils... the future of democracy depends upon leadership more than the average level of the community. Leaders, not laggards, should determine many of our school aims and methods". It was this conviction that led to the discontinuation of Home Science - an "easy option" at Wood's school in 1940 and the rejection of Mrs. Anna Vroland's request of the early fifties for greater remedial teaching. If Walker was pragmatic in his approach towards progressive education, it is equally true that he never believed in a meritocracy and felt strongly about the rights of "laggards".

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Walker's Collected Essays on Education contains only one reference to his school's academic curriculum: "We gave instruction in languages, science, mathematics, social studies: these all went along steadily, over many years. This comment, solitary and brief, was reflective of Walker's opinion of the curriculum, but it was hardly an

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75. Lawry, H.J., op. cit., p. 185.
attitude that could have pleased everyone, especially those parents and students who looked at Box Hill Grammar as a vehicle by which to achieve academic success. The crux of the matter was that Walker's was not an academic school. Walker chose to emphasize the activities aspect of the curriculum. There is little doubt that, at M.C.E.G.G.S., Dorothy Ross made a more significant contribution to the problem of children who were not potential university students. Each girl made up her own timetable and some senior students "were studying syllabuses leading to an external matriculation in the following year, and to the University after that, while others were studying syllabuses of a more general interest type leading in the following year to a broad post-Leaving Certificate awarded by the school as marking the completion of a general education".79

At M.L.C., Wood suggested that "our age needs a new aristocracy of intellect".80 Such a judgement was based on a particular perception of society's needs and so he believed in a clear division between those subjects - literary, scientific and mathematical - which for him met those needs and others which provided enrichment. Walker believed with equal honesty, but with less dignity, that education's role in the reconstruction of society lay in its development of character so that the individual could meet and respond to society's challenges and responsibilities. Walker wrote that "childhood shapes the destiny of the adult. The child should not be a passive but an active learner, constantly practising ways of getting on with his fellows".81 Few educators would disagree, but they would not undervalue the role of academic standards in society's improvement.

80. Quoted in Zainu'ddin, op. cit., p. 283.
CHAPTER FIVE

WALKER AND HIS FAMILY

Those who knew Box Hill Grammar between 1929 and 1964 invariably describe the school as a family.

So clearly did Walker dominate the family that it became a reflection of his collectivist ideas. In many ways, Walker's command of the governing processes brought benefits: much evidence suggests that Box Hill Grammar attempted to meet and gratify inter-personal needs (especially until the early fifties) and so for many, was a place of nurture, support and direction. On the other hand, Walker's position as headmaster and patriarch reinforced his natural authoritarianism and a belief in the sanctity of his opinions. One consequence was a considerable degree of insensitivity: his own children, for example, lived with the boarders – indeed Walker classified them as boarders in his roll book – and so there have been regrets in later years that they were denied a normal upbringing. Perhaps there was a compensation for the Walker children. They formed remarkably strong attachments to their mother despite, as one daughter put it, "socialistic frowns" from father that mother was paying them too much attention. Another consequence was that the communal and egalitarian nature of the school was a matter of compulsion: one perceptive former student found it difficult to find security in the no-man's land between the demands of obedience and the professions of freedom. But most enjoyed their school days, able to adjust in a situation where Walker's benevolent dictatorship was not far removed from the then accepted role of a father. It was only in the last few years

1. Interviews with Anne Walker, Evan Walker, Jean Provan, Kath Beanland and Frances Millar. Equally, this was hardly possible since the Walker family lived at the school.

2. Interview with Jean Provan and Wendy Lowenstein.
that a gulf appeared between students' perceived needs and Walker's offering, and this was at a time when families bound by kinship were also under strain.

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Five factors explain the presence of a family atmosphere at Box Hill Grammar. In the first place, the school was a descendant and survivor of the dozens of small proprietary schools which had emerged in the educational market place of nineteenth century Victoria offering instruction beyond the most elementary level.  In 1855 the University of Melbourne was opened, leading to an increased demand for secondary education, but since the state did not open high schools until 1905, private education was the only avenue to the professional and commercial world. The various denominations operated schools like Wesley, Scotch, Melbourne Grammar and Xavier, but the government's failure to open secondary schools also provided profitable opportunities for men like Arthur Robert Stephenson, who founded New College in 1890. Under Stephenson, New College's roll never rose beyond 54; he became, rather like Fitchett at M.L.C., more of a "pater familias" than remote demi-god; he shared most of the teaching with his brother Stuart and later with his daughters Olive and Kathleen, and his wife, Sarah, acted as matron of the boarding house.

Secondly, although the Methodist church assumed financial responsibility in 1929, Walker sought to preserve the family tradition of the school since it suited his temperament and background. Particularly proud of his family's origins and pioneering spirit, the nature of life in the district in the early years of the twentieth century

confirmed in Walker's mind the worth of co-operation. Box Hill, its population 2,000 in 1906, was a gossip-sized market town, each Wednesday the scene of bustling activity. Farmers inspecting cattle, pigs and poultry, spat and smoked almost continuously, the auctioneer used a rostrum to support his overhanging stomach and rattled through his patter with such speed that dribbles of spit fell onto his waistcoat and the nearby Railway Hotel was, at the end of day, a place of much drinking and unseemly behaviour. At the same time, the district was strongly influenced by a restrictive morality which was both a defence against the spread of social evils symbolized by the market and a reaction to the "monkeyism" of the new science. Earnest councillors and citizens condemned the Sunday trains to Ferntree Gully and ensured that on the day of rest, no sport was played on public reserves. Temperance organizations were strong and their views were shared by the shire council, which resolved in 1906 that the drink evil and gambling mania "are wrecking the lives of thousands". The hardship, isolation, coarseness and contradictions of life in the Nunawading Shire strengthened the need for familial bonds and demonstrated that there was security and comfort in the companionship of relations. The Methodist church, which Walker attended, was a wider circle of like-minded folk which served to reinforce this fact, as did Walker's growing interest in the communal ideas of left-wing writers like William Lane and William Guthrie Spence. Well versed in the history of the Methodist church, Walker understood Wesley's advice: "Send your boys not to any of the large public schools (for they are nurseries of all manner of wickedness) but to a private school kept by some pious man who endeavours to instruct a small

9. Interview with Evan Walker.
number of children in religion and learning together".  

In the third place, Walker was fortunate to have the loyalty and support of the two other important members of the Box Hill Grammar family, his wife Ethel, and the long serving Rupert Brunning. Michael Norman, who followed Walker as headmaster, has observed that "growing up ought to be a fairly eventful experience". If Walker appreciated that "eventfulness" was hard to contrive within the normal structures of classrooms and examinations and sought to achieve it elsewhere, it is equally true that his efforts demanded much from the other adults in the community. Ethel Walker and Brunning were dedicated people who combined practical wisdom with resilience. Above all, they made time for children. Ethel Walker saw herself as the dutiful wife, but was always much more important than she imagined. Never involved in matters of curriculum, she was in charge of the house, did all the ordering and much of the cooking, dealt with tradesmen and hired and fired the boarding staff. Ethel Walker was an extraordinary woman, the miracle behind all successful sports days, concerts, trips and camps. She mended the socks, tended the sick, bandaged the sore places, bore eight children and acted as a buffer between the Box Hill Methodist community and her husband. Her father, Herbert Ingamells, had been instrumental in persuading the congregation to erect the church in Oxford Street and her family was so highly regarded that, in order to avoid offence, Walker was treated with a greater degree of deference than his personality at times warranted. Walker realized his debt, noting that Ethel was able to secure co-operation "probably in a way I never could", and confessed that her "lovely

12. Interview with Ethel Walker.
13. Interview with Anna Alexander.
equanimity and wisdom based on true and deep loyalties are our greatest assets". Ethel Walker was able to perceive when her husband was troubled: in a calm and gentle way she could ease the problem into the open where it was discussed, options explored and emotions defused. Whether Walker understood this is problematical: although he returned her love, he rather took her loyalty for granted. Walker loved his wife and wrote tender letters to her when they were separated - "I am with you all the time in my thoughts, and remember that I love you darling more than tongue can tell" - but he was unable to hide his displeasure when overwork forced Ethel more than once, to leave the school and rest: "It is not good saying she should have less to do ... someone has to do it ... What is home without a mother?"16

Brunning, who joined the staff in 1935, was born at St. Kilda in 1898 into a family which ran a nursery along Brighton Road. He studied Medicine during the Great War, enlisted in the medical corps and went overseas. After the war, he worked for a time in the slums of London, a traumatic experience which helped shape his genuine compassion and love of children. He became a pacifist and, later a Quaker. On his return to Melbourne, Brunning worked for a time in the family business, then returned to the University where he took out a degree in science and a diploma in education. Walker and Brunning had much in common: both regarded war as the ultimate evil, both were Labor voters (though neither joined the political party), they shared the concept that schools should be co-educational and have a relaxed


17. Interview with Mrs. Brunning.

18. Ibid.
atmosphere, refused to accept a narrow application of the word curriculum and were influenced by religious beliefs which diverged from the mainstream of opinion. The relationship between the two men, then, was a strong one, though Walker may have been a little jealous of Brunning's easy popularity. Brunning proved to be the perfect foil. He was the convergent thinker and his orderliness, absolute punctuality and attention to detail provided the sort of stability which Walker was temperamentally incapable of supplying.

An ex-student described the influence of Walker and Brunning: "The 'Boss' had his great influence on the school, but Brunning had his influence on the students - his understanding and guidance was legendary: this makes 'Brunno' the greater teacher. It is always easier to remember the tangible things like school buildings, occasions, so the 'Boss' looms large in people's minds in relation to Box Hill Grammar, but 'Brunno' was always a great steadying force at school and in fact was crucial to its day-to-day running. Many of the daily decisions or sorting out of problems were done by him". Illness forced his premature retirement in 1960, but Brunning remained faithful to the school. In the same year, Walker received notice that the staffing ratio had fallen below the appropriate level and that the school was liable to be deregistered. Brunning, in considerable pain, returned to teach for a short time until Walker could find a replacement.

The family atmosphere at Box Hill evolved from more than tradition, influences felt by Walker during his formative years and the characters

19. Interview with George Wilson, Jean Provan.
20. Interview with John Alexander.
21. Interview with Perry Larsson.
of his wife and most trusted lieutenant. It is important to note, in the fourth place, that the school was small enough to avoid the institutionalization which Walker so disliked. At M.L.C., by contrast, there were 650 pupils in 1939 and 2,200 in 1966. Harold Wood believed in large schools, essentially because "more girls can come under the influence of Christian teaching".

Aware "that girls could feel lost in a large school", Wood placed a senior mistress at each year level: apart from this initiative, it was hoped that the devotion of the staff, a realization on the part of the girls of "the advantages gained from the buildings and equipment of a large school" and a method devised by Wood to identify students on the basis of shorthand notes relating to personal appearance written on record cards would overcome the problem of anonymity.

Such devices did not always work. A sensitive student of the early fifties has written, (her thoughts refer also to Wood's proselytic zest), that M.L.C. was so large that it was like a vast oyster bed devoted "to the Last Supper, not to the banquet of life or the production of pearls". Whilst it must be admitted that one opinion serves merely to invite collaboration or refutation, the complaint of this student is an eloquent argument against big schools and the attitudes that often accompany them:

"I submitted with angry and sorrowful astonishment to the regimen: mass assemblies where sinners ... owned up to various misdemeanours, earning the pitying contempt of those who had got away; religious instruction lessons where girls - usually the sporting-leadership ones - prayed loudly and sanctimoniously for the

24. Ibid.
the starving of India and the dying in hospitals: singing lessons where the unmusical and the terrified were forced to sight-read tunes hieroglyphed on blackboards ... foot inspections before swimming classes where we ... (were) ... fossicked for signs of tinea. Encouragement of the inward life and individual awareness were entirely absent".27

Finally, even though Walker's irritation at the lack and paucity of the school's facilities was obvious, the battered buildings, comparatively underdeveloped grounds and the presence of animals created an environment rich with possibilities for adventure and mythology. The 24 acre site had places of almost tribal significance. The sloping ground at the west end of the Cato block was ideal for developing the skill of riding bicycles backwards, "Dubby's yard" held supplies of timber of all shapes and sizes that could be manufactured into a variety of artefacts, the dam could be fished for yabbies and more than once lambs were left behind to play with by drovers moving sheep to saleyards in the city.28 There were horses to ride, cattle to look at, crops to tend, an irrigation system that required maintenance, wood to chop, trees to climb and groundsmen like Herb Jemmeson, "Paddy" Toogood and Fred Cox to yarn with. Boys and girls helped paint the buildings, sometimes during school holidays, and there was genuine affection for the boarding accommodation, especially the cottage, despite its spartan nature.29 The schoolgrounds were rather like a huge backyard where growing children could come to terms with an important part of themselves. Perhaps, more importantly, the distinctive sights, sounds and smells of Box Hill Grammar helped to

27. Ibid., p. 103.
28. Interview with Anna Walker.
29. Interview with Anna Walker, Evan Walker.
promote a feeling of belonging, a pride in the place as the poor re-
lation of Wesley and N.L.C.

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Despite the claim that "a child absorbs its scale of values from the 
life, the tone, the atmosphere of the school in which it is educated", 
it would be an exaggeration to suggest that Walker's school profoundly 
affected the lives of most of the children who sat in its classrooms. 30 
The family atmosphere may have been congenial, but well over one-half 
of the pupils were either too young or stayed for too short a period 
of time to have absorbed anything of permanence beyond a little know-
ledge. There are indications, also seen in the statistics given in 
Chapter II, that the influence of the school must have varied over 
time: the values and attitudes presented by Walker, if we accept 
memories, remained constant, but the reception of what was offered 
depended on a number of variables including the size of the school, 
general community expectations, the state of economy and whether the 
country was at war or peace.

The basic functions of a family are to provide for the support and 
nurture of its members, in essence survival and growth. 31 Although 
blurring between the functions occurs, it is useful to consider 
Walker's school firstly, as a support system and secondly as an in-
stitution which promoted growth by standing for a set of principles 
and behaviour and making them known.

That Box Hill Grammar acted as a support system for many is to be 
verified by the memories of former students who recalled acts of com-
passion, generosity and kindness which they recognized were made with

op. cit., p. 102.

The Family in Australia: Social Demographic and Psychological Aspects (Sydney, 
no other reward in mind other than the hope of personal comfort. In general, it was the boarders or children from broken homes who were helped most in this way because their needs were more readily perceived and their nurture, removed from the care of parents, more obviously at risk. One girl, whose divorced parents sent her to Box Hill as a boarder between 1948 and 1958, found herself pregnant. After consultation with his wife and Brunning, Walker decided that the risk of criticism over the potentially scandalous situation was of little consequence and he offered the girl employment in the boarding house if she chose not to marry. In the event, the girl married, but the offer made a deep impression: "for ten years, Box Hill Grammar was the only stable influence in my life". It is not difficult to record other examples of generosity. During the holidays, Walker's own family of six girls and two boys was always enlarged by children like Ron and overseas students who could not return home. Several former students remember that they were given free tuition after they had left the school.

Walker was always interested in children with learning difficulties or histories of behavioural or psychological problems. It could be argued, of course, that such children served to increase the roll, but this would ignore that part of his personality was, as one of his daughters observed, "to rally around anyone who was different".

Walker took an interest in the nature-nurture debate - "environment (food, work ... climatic conditions, social conditions) has more effect than hereditary and race" - and was aware, a matter of ample observation,

32. Interview with "Beverley". The boy involved was not a student at S.H.G.S.
33. Ibid.
34. Interviews with Trevor Boucher and Rosemary Milne.
35. Interview with Jean Provan.
that children were complicated human beings. But his was an intuitive approach, that of a father given custody. The boy who stole money was rehabilitated, rather in the style of A.S. Neill, by making him responsible for the school banking. On another occasion (perhaps the psychology was crude but it proved effective) Walker had a boy repeat his name—"I am Duffy"—again and again to overcome a lack of self-confidence. One of the school's successes was Bill, who was enrolled as an eight year-old boarder. There had been trouble at home and Bill was quite unable to speak. Walker watched the boy as he settled into his new school and decided to help. Walker taught Bill to play chess—every night he slowly explained the pieces and their moves—and after a few weeks, the boy's excitement and interest caused him to utter a few words. Bill was also interested in horses and after school watched the boys and girls popping over hurdles at the riding school. He noticed that one horse, "Gamble," made an odd noise when it cantered and made a comment. Those standing with Bill heard the words and soon there was an animated conversation.

Box Hill Grammar had its share of students it failed to rehabilitate. Simon, the son of a Tasmanian orchardist arrived in June 1937, aged 14, and quickly set about confirming rumours of his reputation by making indecent suggestions to girls and by boasting of his prowess in stealing cars. Walker had not been able to resist the challenge of helping the boy but his hopes were dashed when, later in the year, he received a call from the police at Kilmore explaining that they had detained a boy in a stolen car. Walker was quick witted enough

36. Bible Study notebook, 16 August, 1936.
37. Interview with Bill Secombe.
38. Interview with Trevor Boucher.
39. Interview with Evan Walker.
40. Interview with Jean Provan.
to salvage something from the wreckage. When he drove to Kilmore to obtain the boy's release, he filled his Studebaker with students and created an excursion, and he later encouraged attendance at court to observe the legal proceedings. Whether Walker learnt a lesson from this experience is doubtful. He was well aware of criticism by some parents that the "lame ducks" lowered the school's tone and he exercised some restraint by sometimes rejecting boys if they were serious bed wetters. But he was temperamentally incapable of carefully treading the delicate line between a genuine concern for individuals and the need to protect the school's reputation. By the mid-fifties, the school was still accepting children with behavioural problems. One student from this time recalled that support for the Richmond Football team was both universal and compulsory because of the arrival of an older boy, rumoured to have been expelled from Wesley, who persuaded supporters of other clubs to change their allegiances.

It is likely that the growth in the school's size and advancing age reduced Walker's effectiveness, but the point is that the old impulse to help and care was not diminished. In 1957, for example, Walker offered to give the school several acres of land he had bought at Healesville so that a camp similar to Wesley's at Chum Creek could be established.

When we turn to consider the contribution Box Hill Grammar made to the growth of its pupils it is necessary to note, in the first place, that any institution, through its rituals, traditions and environment, attempts to influence beliefs and opinions. In the case of schools, armed with the weapon of instruction, there is a deliberate attempt, but it should be noted that, as Weick puts it, they are "loosely-

41. Ibid.
42. Interview with Ethel Walker.
43. Interview with Perry Larsson.
44. Walker, C.F., Diary, 15 September, 1957.
coupled" institutions since they work with variable raw materials, have no clear theory of causation and their goals are indeterminate.  

In the second place, sociologists such as Emile Durkheim, in recognizing that education has been influenced by perceptions of society's needs, have observed that without conditioning to accept shared sentiments, individuals would collapse into anomie. Socialization is, then, both attempted and necessary, but is it effective in terms of its stated aims? To illustrate that problem, Wood at M.L.C. found, despite his honest endeavours to promote Christianity, that in 1954, 31 per cent of his girls' parents never attended church and this had become 40 per cent by 1960. He explained the cause as "indifference of some homes" and in so doing added another dimension to the difficulty of separating the rhetoric of a school's aims from the reality of achievement: a school is only one of many institutions, including the family, neighbourhood, and the church, which seeks to mould values. In all, although education is, as the American Ralph Tyler stated, "the process of changing the behaviour patterns of people", there is no way of measuring the change, value judgements are necessary when assessing the virtues of the change and we cannot be certain, if change occurs, of the forces which lay at the root of the alteration. To avoid a search for the values which Walker hoped would influence his pupils would, however, side-step a view of humanity on which the ethos of the school largely rested.

In sifting through opinions and recollections, one is struck by the importance accorded the individual. Walker's obvious delight

in individuals and their differences can be seen in his habit of designating nick-names and his toleration of idiosyncratic behaviour. 49

According to one of his fellow-students, one young boy had a passion for climbing trees when he arrived at the school in the early thirties. During class time and over a period of a few months, he was given a free rein and managed to conquer all the trees on the property. He then settled into his studies and later became an engineer. 50

Another boy, from a farm, was encouraged to overcome his homesickness, to Walker's advantage, by chopping wood during lunchtime. 51 No restrictions were applied in the case of a girl who insisted, even though Walker tried to change her mind, on riding her horse to school from Blackburn in the late fifties. 52 More than once, high-spirited older students whom Walker feared might use their spare time to become involved in petty mischief, were encouraged to help out in the office or assist in junior classes. 53

Walker saw that the giving of responsibility often modified behaviour. One old boy who arrived from Swift's Creek in 1949 remembers that, as a shy country boy, he had trouble in adjusting to the school and that his first term "was miserable": he was asked to help with the organization of the school magazine, was made manager of a Saturday afternoon cricket team and was given the task of choosing, collecting and returning films, from the State Film Centre. 54 Examples of this sort are not unusual, but in general, Walker preferred collective

49. Interview with Trevor Boucher.
50. Interview with John Alexander.
52. Interview with Hilary Oakes, student at B.H.G.S., 1954-63, now a teacher.
53. Interview with Kath Beanland and Ethel Walker.
54. Interview with Trevor Boucher.
responsibilities. Mention has already been made of the role of the pupils in the self-government of the school: they were also encouraged to choose and assist in the preparation of items for concerts and speech nights, to select sporting teams and to help with the maintenance of the property and buildings and the operation of the dairy and the farm. It would be wrong, of course, to picture Box Hill Grammar as a place of frenzied pupil activity where everyone milked cows, harvested crops, dug slit trenches or constructed tennis courts, and it is true that much of what was done relieved Walker of physical burdens and cost. But the planning and supervision of children's tasks is not necessarily without its difficulties; the evidence suggests that many — particularly older children and boarders — were involved and Walker would have hoped that even those who simply observed would have learnt that an individual's actions have an effect on others.

Walker believed in the brotherhood of man, an attitude which had been formed from a combination of religious and political principles, his later evolution into humanism serving merely to strengthen his collectivist ideas. Selfishness lay at the basis of society's evils and reform was necessary. Schools "which are full of snobbery and social prestige" impeded progress. On a political level, Walker wrote in his diary that "from all I can learn from reading, discussion and observation of results, the Labor party is the most sincerely democratic of all parties and there is more hope of reform and progress from them than from any other". On an international level, Walker believed that the "hope of the world lies in willing support of the

55. Walker, C.F., "Co-education..."

United Nations ... the ... conception of justice and right-living can spread throughout the world through sensible education and democratic techniques and allow us all to live in Peace and Goodwill". 57

Walker paid more than lip-service to these principles. The annual Anzac Day services, conducted either by Walker or Brunning, were confessions of pacifism leaving the children of Box Hill Grammar in no doubt where the sympathies of the headmaster and his deputy lay. 58 The post-war concern with the activities of the Communist Party of Australia and its alleged penetration of peace movements did not deter Walker from attending rallies, and taking senior students with him, to listen to speakers like the Rev. Frank Hartley. 59 What headmaster of a public school would have invited Wilfred Burchett to talk on the Korean War at the school's 1951 Speech Night? 60 Walker was, of course, aware that his convictions attracted criticism, but he felt that a vital issue was at stake. After his retirement, he became president of the eastern suburbs branch of the United Nations Association of Australia and from the beginning, opposed Australia's intervention in Vietnam. 61

If Walker's school affected attitudes, we should look to the behaviour of its students. Box Hill Grammar produced few notable public figures - there is some little irony in the fact that the best known is the golfer David Graham - and the fact that 62 per cent of ex-students

57. Ibid., 6 April, 1969.
58. Interviews with Trevor Boucher and Evan Walker. B.H.G.S. Chronicle suggested that "we will all turn pacifists", 29 April, 1940.
59. Interview with Trevor Boucher.
60. Speech Night Programme 1951. Walker's diary reveals that "Wilfred Burchett's family have been friends of ours since the time we lived in Ballarat", 19 February 1970.
interviewed at random usually voted Labor is interesting but to over-emphasize its significance is to isolate the percentage from the community-wide set of forces which determine political preferences. In conduct, however, the school appears to have been remarkably egalitarian. On girl remembers having a "blazing row" with Walker, another notes that "we were free to have fierce and passionate arguments because emotions were part of education".\(^6\) This relationship as has been pointed out, contributed to the nature of the school's discipline: one boy observed that it was difficult for a teacher to be severe "when you had been bush-walking with him during the weekend".\(^6\) The school seems to have been remarkably free from sub-groups. The boarders of the thirties may well be an exception: they tended to be a particularly self-reliant group as they were, as a rule a little older than day pupils and many came from solid farming backgrounds. It seems likely that they responded to the school's ethos more readily than most, indeed, it is possible that they contributed to it. As a group they were closer to the Walkers, but the school's thinking on sport was a barrier to dominance: the boarders may have thought that they were superior to day pupils, but were prevented in the absence of House versus School contests, from achieving sporting confirmation. Besides, it was quite common for the boarder's day friends to visit at weekends and all of the school's activities, including camps and tours, were open to everyone.\(^6\) After the war, boarders were younger and generally stayed for a shorter period than before: whatever influence they had had or imagined was also reduced by the higher proportion who came from Melbourne and its suburbs, children scarcely distinguishable in composition and attitude from

62. Interviews with Wendy Lowenstein and Rosemary Milne.
63. Interview with Gordon Jacobs.
64. Interviews with Ethel Walker and Frances Millar.
day pupils. Another potential sub-group was the Asian students, mostly Chinese boys from Rabaul, whom the church placed in Walker's care after the war. In 1951, the Leaving Certificate class of 23 students contained seven Chinese boys, made welcome by Walker since they added to the top of the school. They were well received by the pupils too: as was the case at M.L.C. which also accepted students from Asia, they provided a glimpse of a heritage that was not Anglo-Saxon at a time when assumptions of white superiority were only rarely challenged. A student of that era suggested that "the White Australia Policy was disregarded ... and we came to believe that the colour of the skin didn't matter ... it was what the person was that mattered". Walker would have been pleased with this reaction. He later wrote that "we must all come to realize that mankind is one species".

What was the place of religion in the life of Walker's family?

Conference's Statement on Education of 1930 set out clearly that "in the work of education ... (the) ... supreme object is ... the formation of Christian character" and stressed the development of spirituality.

Box Hill Grammar had a religious life in a formal sense - school began with prayers, the boarders went to church and lessons in scripture were given by the local minister, often with Walker in attendance to preserve order - but there appears to have been no attempt to socialize children in the Methodist tradition and there was little of the religious atmosphere noted at schools like M.L.C. where Wood believed that "the only raison d'etre of a church school" was to

66. Interview with Trevor Boucher.
68. Interview with Barbara Ball.
70. Methodist Conference Minutes 1930, p. 290.
"teach the Christian faith". Not one of the former students or staff members interviewed in connection with this thesis can recall any effort to indoctrinate and most noted the school's spiritual life as insignificant, including those who wrongly thought Walker was an ordained minister. There were two reasons for this. In the first place, Walker's religious opinions were rarely traditional. He had, for example, always been uncomfortable with what he regarded as the trappings of Christianity - virgin birth, the resurrection, the trinity and original sin. Indeed, he thought the latter insulted human capacity and he had no sense of himself as a fallen creature. Nor did he believe in miracles: feeding the multitude was regarded by the man as an example of how a small boy, in giving his loaves and fishes, inspired others who had brought food to bring it out. Thus generosity leads to generosity, and this was a far greater miracle than the supposed creation of food. Time and wide reading saw changes in the nature of Walker's beliefs. Still captivated by the idea of Jesus as a great teacher who sacrificed his life for others and, in so doing, demonstrated the meaning of existence, Walker abandoned Methodism in later life, preferring the humanism of Russell and Huxley. It is at least likely that Walker came to regard the church's attitude to him and his school as conservative and obstructive and, much in the way that Jesus was a revolutionary, chose to defy tradition. We must be aware that whatever lip-service Walker eventually paid the church, he knew who his employer was and respecting this and his own privacy, never spoke against Methodism or its mission. Secondly, Walker believed that character was developed in a number of contexts:

72. Interview with Evan Walker.
73. Interview with Evan Walker who added that his father sent copies of one of Huxley's books to all his children, advising that, if they did not read it, there would be nothing to talk about when they visited.
religious ideas and beliefs were less important than "projects" organized in the home or school, in learning or at play. In this sense, he saw the church not as a disseminator of doctrine, but as an organization which should arrange activities for both children and adults.

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During the last ten years of Walker's headmastership the family atmosphere of Box Hill Grammar deteriorated. His educational ideas static, Walker was increasingly regarded by a major part of the school family as old-fashioned. The result amongst many students and teachers was ethical confusion and disenchantment with what Box Hill Grammar offered. Student dissatisfaction revealed itself in complaints about academic standards and growing ill-discipline. Walker's relationship with his staff soured, a state of affairs exacerbated by Brunning's growing inability to intercede and act as mediator. In 1957, aware of mounting criticism of his direction and administration of the school by teachers including Stan Adams, Walker announced that "unfavourable gossip is to be avoided" and prepared a list of rules for his teachers warning that "indolence, incompetence, unpunctuality, lack of courtesy and other such unprofessional conduct cannot be defended". In his diary, Walker wrote that "some of the teachers have not been taking their share in grounds supervision or in extramural activities. We may have to drop one or two in order to encourage the others". The staff reacted variously as Walker applied the pressure: some were intimidated, others angry as the gap widened between their head's professions of freedom and his authoritarian expectations, and some

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74. Walker, C.F., "What Shall We Teach", sermon notes.

75. Confidential memo to staff, undated but c. 1957 found amongst Walker's personal papers.

76. Walker, C.F. Diary, 13 April, 1957.
declared him to be senile. Stanton Crouch resigned, distressed by Walker's obsession that the staff was plotting to remove their headmaster through complaints to council and its chairman, the Rev. Douglas Brimacombe. Matters came to a head in an incident involving Bruce Fisher, a teacher of Science and Mathematics. Fisher thought himself to be overworked and set an examination which, in its simplicity enraged Walker when it was discovered. Walker insisted that Fisher should resign, but Brimacombe and the council held that the teacher "had been given an assurance in respect of 1963" and that the school was bound to employ him. Dismayed by the lack of support, Walker took matters into his own hands and refused to allow Fisher to teach. Fisher engaged legal advisors and the matter was settled out of court.

This incident was, in fact, the final demonstration that relations between Walker and his council had broken down. It will be recalled that, once free of Wesley's option, Box Hill Grammar embarked on a building programme in 1957. Enrolments did not increase and Walker was blamed. Perhaps both the headmaster and his council were unaware that the school's building programme was too late in terms of demographic factors to tap the market, and were not fully appreciative of the effects of a slump in the economy caused by the so-called "credit squeeze". Council felt entitled to question Walker's role: if he had been responsible for so much in the past, then presumably he should be held responsible for the present failure to expand.

77. Interview with George Wilson, Jean Provan, who was a teacher at B.H.G.S. in these final years.
78. Ibid.
81. Sinclair, W.A., The Process of Economic Development in Australia (Melbourne, 1976), p. 224-5: "the return to peace was signalled by a 'baby boom' which greatly added to the proportion of dependents...By the 1950's this post-war bulge had moved into the employable age group". Walker wrote to 30 parents who cancelled enrolments for 1959: "parents who replied...said that economic factors caused changes in their plans". Headmaster's Report to Council, 17 December, 1959.
There is no doubt that Walker felt the situation deeply. He asked whether it was possible for a headmaster to have done more:

"I teach full-time in the school, and I have always done so: I prepare all materials for the accounts ... I engage all the staff and supervise their work, arrange their time-tables, discuss with them their syllabuses of instruction: I interview all parents for enrolment of pupils and for enquiries as to progress or behaviour ... I supervise the boarders in all out-of-school times - meals, games and study prep ... I am on duty all weekend, providing some programme for Saturday, taking the boarders to church on Sunday, getting them off to Sunday school and providing a programme for the evening: I prepare reports for the various committees of the school and attend them all: I had much ... discussion with builders and architects: I help to conduct money-raising efforts and appeals ... I have been coaching the girls' Softball very successfully of late years ... During Christmas holidays I was away from the school very little."82

Worse was to follow. Complaints from his teaching staff blended with others. Walker's diary entries reveal considerable friction with important members of the local church: he attacked those who opposed change - "Alf Allen, Dick Hopkins, Les Watts, Albert Matthews ...(are) ... stick-in-the-muds ... they have earned the opprobrium that attaches to them".83 There was dissatisfaction from the local community: Walker was rumoured to be a communist and the school was commonly referred to as "that place".84 Even Brunning, that gentle and honest

83. Walker, C.F., Diary, 13 April, 1957. Pseudonyms used.
84. Interview with Evan Walker, George Wilson.
man, was unable to avoid attack. He was also "a bit of a Trot.", and there were questions raised in council when "it was reported that ... (he) ... was a shareholder in H.B. Selby and Co. Ltd., from whom he purchased materials for the school".\(^85\) Most damaging, as has been indicated, were rumours that Walker had walked through a dormitory whilst girls were dressing.

In 1959, the school council received a report from an investigative sub-committee which gave its opinion that "the administration has not been satisfactory" and only by a great improvement "and the ability of the headmaster to establish better relations with all concerned ... will there be any future for the school". It concluded that "as it believes that Mr. Walker is not displaying the ability to meet these requirements ... a change should be made in the headmastership of the school".\(^86\)

Council refused to accept its sub-committee's recommendation. Unfortunately it has not been possible to satisfactorily explain this decision or the forces which led to Walker's resignation at the end of 1963, a year before he was due to retire. Council minutes do not reveal details of discussion or debates and none of its members have been prepared to discuss the matter. We do know that Conference decided to abolish co-education in 1961 and that Walker fought against this and failed. It seems likely that his failure and decision to resign were related. More important, in terms of this thesis, is the high degree of probability that reluctance to discuss the events between 1959 and 1963 reflects attempts on both sides to preserve or protect reputations. If this assumption is correct, then it is

\(^{85}\) Interview with Wendy Lowenstein; B.H.G.S. Executive Committee Minutes, 9 April, 1958.

\(^{86}\) B.H.G.S. Council Minutes, 9 April, 1959.
an indication of the strength of the disputes between headmaster and
his council and it marks the end of the family structure with Walker
as its head.

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The irony of these final years should not pass unnoticed. In earlier
years Walker had been able to make interesting educational responses
to the problems associated with the nature of his students, staff,
economic difficulties and relationships with his governing authorities.
The result had been an unusual school. By the early sixties, the
same variables had helped to create a school that was unusual in
quite a different sense. Box Hill Grammar was, as it had been when
Walker became headmaster, close to collapse.
"Under Charles Fitzroy Walker as headmaster, Box Hill Grammar was a school of a special kind ... (with) ... a character and charm of its own ... It was also ... an expression of some very important educational ideas".¹ This comment by Michael Norman, an admirer of Walker, raises three issues which serve to draw together the threads exposed by earlier chapters.

In the first place, a strong link has been drawn between the man and the school. Walker was a man of undoubted energy and the school was largely his creation. Excluding the final years, Walker was at his best when confronted by problems. He wrote that "many difficulties, if they had been foreseen, would no doubt have seemed insuperable but proved to be surmountable when tackled".² Indeed, from the confrontation emerged responses that were at times innovative and imaginative. It must be noted, however, that Walker never received, nor did he deserve it, unreserved admiration. His responses were too often abrasive and intuitive and he lost sight of the importance of rigorous schooling.

Secondly, Norman has suggested that Box Hill Grammar was unusual, the central issue raised in this thesis. Amongst church schools, its tone, problems and features set it apart. It was never, to borrow McLaren's terminology, "proud, aloof and privileged".³ Its problems, particularly those relating to finance and the nature of its students, were reflected in characteristics which included a family atmosphere and, as Walker put in, "the animals, the vegetables, the building

¹. Norman, M., "Some thoughts on the Possible Change of Name", c. 1964.
programme, the camps, the trips, etc.". Box Hill Grammar shared some of the basic features of progressive schools but these features did not rise from a coherent educational base. They were the consequences of "tinkering with machinery, changes in the accidents and not the essentials of education".

Finally, to what degree was Walker's school "an expression of some very important educational ideas?" The truth is that Walker mostly went where the forces of circumstances and his convictions took him, borrowing from theory and practice whatever was congenial, generally in order to solve immediate problems. Walker was no theorist: those who seek ideas in education might find the Niel's Koornong a more rewarding area of study. Alternatively, this writer has been struck by the fact that Walker was able to entertain a notion of what life should be like - the Character Education Inquiry is an expression of this - and in his small way, in a tiny school, tried to do something about it.

5. Petersen, R.C., op. cit., p. 4.
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