

# **FOUR AVENUES: A SCHOOL WITHOUT WALLS?**

## **A Social History of Four Avenues Alternative School in Christchurch, New Zealand**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Sociology

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# ABSTRACT

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This thesis provides a social history of Four Avenues Alternative School in Christchurch, New Zealand, beginning with the school's establishment in the mid-1970s and ending with its closure in 1993. This thesis addresses the question of how Four Avenues maintained its place in the state education system for 18 years and how that place was threatened over time. Using microhistorical analysis, it discusses the school's history through the intensive study of three events in that history: 1) the opening of Four Avenues in May 1975; 2) the Department of Education's decision to close Four Avenues early in 1983; and 3) the Education Review Office (1993) audit that recommended Four Avenues' closure in 1993. These events are selected because they were points in Four Avenues' history where its survival was an open issue. This thesis argues three features of Four Avenues' history were important in helping it to remain open: the school's relationship to wider political events and circumstances, its relationship to Hagley High School/Hagley Community College, and the commitment of many within the school to the pedagogy they saw it as embodying. These three features helped Four Avenues to remain a part of the state education system; yet they also threatened its survival as a state school over time and eventually contributed to its closure.

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## A NOTE ON REFERENCING

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When secondary and primary sources are referred to throughout this thesis an in-text referencing system is used, except where a primary source like a newspaper article with no date or page number is cited only once, then it is footnoted with information about the archival collection that it came from.

A condition of my use of the Archives New Zealand and Ministry of Education records on Four Avenues was that I could only refer to the author/s and recipients of documents and correspondence by their institutional title. If a recipient or author did not have a title then I have referred to her or him with a generic title like 'Parent at Four Avenues', 'Coordinator at Four Avenues' and so on so as to protect privacy.

Furthermore, one of the conditions of my use of Archives New Zealand and Ministry of Education archival material was that information about the author(s) and/or recipient(s) of documents could not be inferred from other sources cited—for example, newspaper articles at the time and interviews. Thus, to provide the personal name of the Director of Four Avenues in 1993 by quoting from an interview transcript and then to quote a letter from her using her institutional title would contravene the conditions of my use of these archives. It is for this reason that I have made an exception in this thesis in referring to interview participants by their personal name when it comes to the Hagley Deputy Principal. In referring to his interview transcript, his institutional title 'Hagley Deputy Principal' is used rather than his personal name. This is done so his personal name cannot be connected with documents that were authored by him in his role as Hagley Deputy Principal in 1993.

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# CHAPTER I

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## *Introduction*

Four Avenues was an alternative state high school in Christchurch, New Zealand from 1975 to 1993. It was never technically a “school”, but an “attached unit” of Hagley High School (and later Hagley Community College) in Christchurch.<sup>1</sup> Its original approach was adapted from the Parkway Program in Philadelphia, United States and the “Deschooling” ideas of Illich (1973) and Rimmer (1971).<sup>2</sup> No uniforms would be required and each student would be afforded the independence to learn according to their interests and needs. Through weekly school meetings, both students and “coordinators” (Four Avenues’ name for teachers) would exercise executive power in running Four Avenues—no matter what role or title, one-person one vote. In consultation with caregivers and coordinators, each student would formulate and follow an Individual Education Programme (IEP). The community and its amenities would be Four Avenues’ classrooms, and the school would foster a friendly, encouraging learning atmosphere by staying small and intimate—no more than a roll of 70 to 75 students. Examinations would not dominate learning and Four Avenues would be open to all of high schooling age, with no zoning statutes or class bias playing a role in selection.

This summary indicates both the hopes many held for Four Avenues when it opened and the reasons it generated controversy in the public sphere: it was so different from anything else in the state education system. When Four Avenues opened, many hoped it would be a portent of fundamental change in the education system, making formal education less important as children and adults alike caught on to the possibilities of informal, self-directed learning

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<sup>1</sup>Four Avenues was never legally a high school like Hagley Community College in Christchurch is a high school, for instance. It was legally an attached unit or department of Hagley. Nevertheless, throughout its history Four Avenues was largely considered an independent school. Therefore, I have reflected this perception in this thesis by mostly referring to Four Avenues as a “school,” even though this was not technically correct. Chapters 3 and 4 refer to Four Avenues as a “programme” generally and only from chapter 5 onwards is Four Avenues spoken of as a school consistently. This is deliberate. It reflects the adoption in the late 1970s of the name which Four Avenues came to be known for the rest of the time it remained in place—“Four Avenues Alternative School.”

<sup>2</sup>Apart these two books, the reader in the Deschooling movement edited by Lister (1974) presents some of the relevant writings in the movement and the debates that it generated internationally in the early 1970s.

outside the context of an institution. Jack Shalcrass (1976), the education columnist for the *Listener* in the 1970s, expressed the hopes many had for Four Avenues when he wrote:

The Christchurch school, known as Four Avenues, will be the first alternative school in the state system. Though it will be under the overall control of the Hagley High School Board, it will function independently. Like the Parkway Programme in Philadelphia it will work from a downtown office and make use of existing community facilities—libraries, museums, hospitals, laboratories, playing fields etc. Each unit of 12 students and its tutor will be responsible for finding a base from which to operate and, given all necessary help, will be responsible for devising its own programmes. This does not mean the abdication of adult responsibility but it does mean that everyone concerned becomes a party to decisions. ... The essential elements in the scheme are: small working groups, personal responsibility for their own work, learning in the community, and adult, especially parent participation. There will be much interest in the progress of this school and the similar project planned for Dunedin. They could be forerunners of many more (263).

These words do not provide details about the later history of Four Avenues, but they do provide an orientation for this later history, which is the subject matter of this thesis. This thesis provides a<sup>3</sup> social history of Four Avenues from 1975 to 1993. It discusses how the initial hope many had for Four Avenues—of education that was “alternative” and qualitatively different from what was offered in other state high schools—originated, was institutionally established and sustained for 18 years, even after the political circumstances that enabled Four Avenues to open passed away. This thesis provides a history of how Four Avenues maintained a place in the state education system for 18 years and of how that place was threatened.

The rest of this chapter explains the distinctive way in which the following chapters relate this history. It discusses my personal experience of Four Avenues and how that experience led to the development here of the particular focus on the question of Four Avenues’ survival. This chapter then provides a broad rationale for the way I have gone about presenting the history of Four Avenues, and it looks at two criticisms of the approach I have adopted. Before outlining the argument in the following chapters, this chapter looks at what has been directly written on

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<sup>3</sup>The use of the indefinite article is deliberate. This thesis does not claim to provide an account of what “really happened” in Four Avenues’ history. The “real” history of Four Avenues in all its “complex particularity happened only once and cannot be recovered by any means” (compare Johnson, 1996: 85).

Four Avenues and discusses the ways in which the present work contributes to that.

## Topical Focus

This thesis examines three critical turning points in Four Avenues' history; that is, three points of crisis where the issue of the Four Avenues' survival and continuation was an open one and far from settled. These points are:

1. The opening of Four Avenues in May 1975.
2. The decision of the Department of Education to close Four Avenues early in 1983.
3. The Education Review Office (1993) Specific Compliance Audit of Four Avenues that recommended the school's closure in 1993.

The word 'crisis' and the expression 'turning point' are used in an especial sense in this thesis—which overlaps with the way they are ordinarily used. In this thesis, they denote notable points in time “where danger and opportunity meet, where the future is in the balance and where events can go either way” (Bosch, 1991: 3). Erik Erickson (1964) captures the way this thesis uses the word 'crisis' when he says:

I must briefly define this ancient little word. In clinical work (as in economics and politics) crisis has increasingly taken on half its meaning, the catastrophic half, while in medicine a crisis once meant a turning point for better or worse, a crucial turn in which a decisive turn *one or another* is unavoidable (138).

Use of the adjective 'notable' is deliberate too. What is common to these points of crisis in Four Avenues' history is that they all had *public* rather than just private import. In looking at the first two turning points, this thesis discusses what it was about the environment in they happened that enabled Four Avenues to continue. In looking at the third, this thesis discusses what was different about the circumstances in which it occurred that it contributed to the end of Four Avenues. Hence, in answering the question of how Four Avenues remained open, this thesis provides a broadly chronological and comparative analysis of how Four Avenues' place in the education system was maintained and threatened over time.

## Development of Interest

My interest in studying the history of Four Avenues comes from my time there as a student in 1991 and 1992. The story of my involvement in the school is typical of many students who went there. Coming from a high school in Christchurch, I transferred to Four Avenues in August 1991 as a fourth former after my parents took me to an open day at the school. The reasons for moving Four Avenues were many, and now hard to recall. My experience at the high school I attended was an unhappy one. In allowing me to go to Four Avenues, my parents hoped that its style of teaching would improve my educational performance and self-esteem. After starting in the fourth form, I continued at Four Avenues until the end of my fifth form year in 1992, taking three School Certificate classes. My exam results were poor. I continued my education at Hagley Community College in 1993, re-sitting the School Certificate classes I had failed. This was the extent of my time at Four Avenues, and I was there just before the events discussed in Chapter 6 happened.

After leaving Four Avenues in 1992, I retained an interest in my time at the school for the following reasons. First, Four Avenues closed after a damning Education Review Office (1993) Specific Compliance Audit in 1993 and conflict between staff at Four Avenues and Hagley Community College. As a former student, I had an interest in what happened after I left and why events turned out the way they did. Next, after I finishing high schooling in 1995, I was advised by a New Zealand Employment Service Officer not to say in my curriculum vitae that I had been a student at Four Avenues. Thirdly, when I was a student at Four Avenues, I was going to a large Pentecostal church in Christchurch and many people in that church assumed that I had been expelled from my previous high school rather than chosen to go to Four Avenues. I came, therefore, to this thesis with many potential, and personally significant, “avenues” in terms of research.

More removed from my own biography, Four Avenues was of interest for a number of other reasons. Four Avenues, along with Auckland Metropolitan College, was one of only two state-run alternative high schools in the education system. Furthermore, a number of alternative high schools were established privately in the 1970s, but only Four Avenues and Auckland Metropolitan College continued beyond this time—the former until 1993, the later until the end of 2001. The establishment of Four Avenues was also a combination of the emergence of various social movements in New Zealand in the 1960s and 1970s and the education policies

of the Third Labour Government. Yet Four Avenues managed to outlast this context and endure beyond the reforms in the New Zealand compulsory education sector initiated by the “Picot Report” (Department of Education, 1988).

As I began the research for this thesis, I wanted to focus on the question of what caused Four Avenues to close and how the conflict between Four Avenues and Hagley Community College developed. In approaching my research with this question, I assumed the relationships within Four Avenues had always been relatively harmonious. I wanted to understand “what happened in the end to change all this?” In 1992, members of the review team that wrote up the penultimate Education Review Office (1992) review on Four Avenues interviewed me. It praised the school in many areas. In terms of the subsequent Education Review Office (1993) audit a year later, therefore, I wanted to know “what had changed?”

As Swidler points out (1979: 4), these kinds of questions, and the outlook presupposed in them, were conditioned by the fact the roles of teachers and students in schools are different. Teacher roles are “achievement roles”—jobs for which they paid—while student roles are “recruitment roles” in which they are involuntary and often unwilling participants (Bidwell, 1965). Although this asymmetry was reduced at Four Avenues—coordinators were often paid very little and students frequently attended school by choice—as a student, I did not have the same outlook as a coordinator. Neither was I aware of the conflicts that went on between coordinators at Four Avenues. I assumed relations between them were relatively amicable, reflecting the friendliness that was proclaimed as a distinctive virtue of Four Avenues. This line of questioning reflected the experience of being a student at Four Avenues, and it was unaware the roles of coordinators and students in the school differed significantly: coordinators had responsibility and students were ultimately clients, even though they were seen as being equal at Four Avenues.

The initial research for this thesis reflected this experience. However, quickly into the research I discovered the prospect of closure that Four Avenues faced in 1993 was not something unprecedented in terms of its overall history. In 1983, Four Avenues had faced the tangible and very real prospect of closure. Moreover, in 1979, there were fears Four Avenues would close after a Department of Education (1979) review of the school. What I thus understood to be an irregular occurrence in Four Avenues’ history—the prospect of closure—was far more regular than I assumed. The difference with the last threat in 1993 was that Four Avenues did not survive.

As a result, the issues I developed an interest in when it came to Four Avenues were not so much centred on “what happened” in the end. This was an important part of the overall story, but I also became interested in analysing what was different about the end in comparison with similar situations before: how did these previous situations come to have a dissimilar outcome? The focus of my research shifted therefore from concentrating on a history of what happened in the end to a history of how Four Avenues created a space for itself in the New Zealand state education system and how that space was threatened over 18 years and eventually disappeared.

## **Approach Used**

This thesis focuses on providing a history of how Four Avenues survived for 18 years in the state education system and of how the school’s ability to remain a part of that system was eventually impaired. In telling this history, this thesis focuses on three *turning points* in Four Avenues’ history. To reiterate, these are the opening of Four Avenues in 1975, the Department of Education’s decision to close Four Avenues in the early 1980s and the Education Review Office audit of Four Avenues in 1993. This thesis consists of three connected “microhistories” (Levi, 1991), so to speak, that are concerned with addressing the question of how Four Avenues managed to survive for 18 years and of how its survival was threatened during that time.

Inevitably, identifying turning points in any history is a subjective exercise, for an observer’s decisions about what those points are depends on what the observer considers important (Noll, 1997: 12). Yet however subjective it is to select a limited number of points as critical moments in Four Avenues’ history, such selection had a number of advantages in terms of my research.

First, it enabled me to select from the immense quantity of available artefacts for studying Four Avenues a few noticeable incidents and so to bring some order into a massively complicated subject that could have been researched from many angles, as indicated above. Second, the selection of turning points had a conceptual appeal. Each of the turning points analysed in this thesis are times in Four Avenues’ history that highlight the contingency of social action, the timeliness of surrounding events and circumstances, and of how things

might have turned out differently without them. Concentrating on turning points “provides an opportunity to highlight, to linger over specific moments so as to display the humanity, the complexity and the uncertainties that constitute ... actual history, but which are often lost in trying to recount the sweep” of events (Noll, 1997: 12).

A turning point approach, third, was used because it provided more scope for interpretation, to show specifically how certain events, actions or incidents signalled a new stage in the history of Four Avenues. Fourthly, this approach was used because it had some consonance with the way many who were intimately involved in Four Avenues understood the history of their school. For example, a former staff member of Four Avenues (Director, 1993) characterised Four Avenues’ history thus:

Four Avenues seems to have lurched from crisis to crisis: be that getting funding, staffing, finding premises three or four times, being closed and reopened, being rebuilt, fighting for autonomy, rejecting autonomy, electing a BOT [Board of Trustees], not having it recognised, “Tomorrows Schools” changes, in dispute with Hagley, and now under threat of closure again (2).

Despite the undeniably contrived element in selecting different turning points in Four Avenues’ history for detailed analysis, it has been done because it is consonant with both the understanding I have gained as a researcher of that history and the understandings of others involved in Four Avenues. As the quotation above shows, the three points singled out for particular attention here are by no means the only ones that could have been selected. Nevertheless, I have chosen these three events because they show the developments and circumstances that both contributed to and threatened Four Avenues’ place in the state education system. Four Avenues was never inherently durable as an organisation. The measure of durability it attained over 18 years required constant effort on the part of those involved in it. The turning points examined in this thesis show in detail what this effort involved and what prompted people at Four Avenues to display it. These turning points also show that the accomplishment of keeping Four Avenues going depended on forces that those involved in the school had little ability to direct or control.

## *Criticisms of Approach*

The three specific turning points that structure the story in this thesis were chosen because the preponderance of sources available to me in my research concentrated around these points. This, in many ways, is the Achilles' heel of the microhistorical or event-centred approach employed in this thesis. "Almost always," as Ross (2001) puts it, "the information which allows such a narrow focus derives from some extraordinary happening which in some way generates a wealth of documentation" (126). The issue Ross raises is whether the picture of Four Avenues moving "from crisis to crisis" here is a relatively accurate depiction of the school over time.

This is an important point. The frame of reference used in this thesis—how Four Avenues' survival over time was enhanced/threatened by its connections with outside institutions and actors—brackets out many everyday aspects of Four Avenues. It hardly touches upon, for example, things like the spatial features of Four Avenues or issues to do with the gendered way of life in the school. The presentation of Four Avenues in this thesis is less a statement about the intrinsic character of the school than it is a reflection of how its life was documented for 18 years. However, the argument of this thesis does not ignore the more "mundane" matters of Four Avenues' life. It incorporates them into its discussion of the three turning points in Four Avenues' history. Chapter 3, for example, in discussing the opening and establishment of Four Avenues, shows that finding suitable buildings in the inner city of Christchurch was important in expressing the educational philosophy of Four Avenues.

Another criticism of microhistorical analysis is that the events it concentrates on, and discusses in detail, are often tenuously related to the wider social context of which they are a part. Ross (2001) makes this point when he says:

The perils [of microhistory] come from the difficulties of relating the details of the stories presented to the wider trends of which they are supposed to be exemplary, a problem exacerbated by the fact that in general those stories which historians can tell in detail are exceptional (126).

This highlights one of the main reasons this thesis discusses the three events it does. They are chosen because they are specific points in Four Avenues' history where the details of Four Avenues' life and wider New Zealand social history visibly intersected. All three turning



points, as the following chapters show, were episodes that had public rather than just private significance. The events themselves were public property (compare Wright, 1992: 117). Each involved media coverage, produced a wealth of documentation, involved the intervention of political actors, and so on. In studying the question of how Four Avenues' remained in place for 18 years, each turning point provides a concrete instance of how the wider social context in which the school was embedded contributed to, and threatened, its capacity to continue.

## **Literature on Four Avenues**

This thesis and the study of Mellon (1978) are the only two academic studies of Four Avenues that have been written. Four Avenues received widespread support from academics in teachers colleges and departments of education in universities right across New Zealand. For example, Graham Nuttal, the former Professor of Education at the University of Canterbury expressed strong interest in ongoing evaluation and research of Four Avenues after reading a proposal given to the Minister of Education on establishing it (Chippenham, No Date: Appendix 7). Only Mellon's (1978) study of Four Avenues, however, seems to have come from this interest.

Mellon's (1978) study of Four Avenues is not widely available;<sup>4</sup> and it was only through an incidental citation of it in a Department of Education (1979) review that I became aware of it. The only publicly available writings on Four Avenues are two Education Review Office (1992; 1993) audits conducted in the early 1990s. The first identified several areas of non-compliance at Four Avenues and claimed the school's level of management and organisation was in need of improvement. However, generally this audit gave Four Avenues a very positive assessment. The second audit, carried out just over one year after the first, was done at the request of the Secretary of Education following concerns that conflict at Four Avenues was affecting its ability to operate effectively (Education Review Office, 1993: 1). This audit was highly critical of the management and governance of Four Avenues, arguing that accountability could not be ensured (Education Review Office, 1993: 1). It also claimed Four Avenues did not provide a safe emotional environment, did not encourage student achievement and it was critical of sporadic student attendance (Education Review Office, 1993: 6-7). For this reason, and because there were irreconcilable differences between the Hagley Community College Board of Trustees and staff within Four Avenues, this audit

<sup>4</sup>It is available in the Departmental library of the Department of Education, University of Canterbury.

recommended the closure of Four Avenues and the use of its premises as a development centre for at risk young people (Education Review Office, 1993: 2).

The only other detailed review of Four Avenues is a report produced by the Department of Education (1979). This report was part of a larger Department assessment of both Four Avenues and Auckland Metropolitan College in the late 1970s. This report was rather negative in much of its assessment of Four Avenues. Yet unlike the Education Review Office audit of Four Avenues in 1993, it recommended the school remain open. The following is representative of its assessment:

The unit [Four Avenues] has ... the negative sense of an avoidance rather than an alternative education philosophy ... What we found discouraging was that ... work was being covered in the dullest of ways. The excessive use of task sheets and the summarising of textbooks does not enthuse many students these days. The argument of Four Avenues teachers and parents that bookish learning in ordinary schools turns kids off is made a mockery of by the lack of practical work and visual material offered at Four Avenues (Department of Education, 1979: 3, 11).

The only piece of academic writing available on Four Avenues is a Diploma of Education thesis by Mellon (1978). The focus on this thesis was on Four Avenues “from the teacher’s point of view.” In it, the author discussed the issue of why Four Avenues made the transition from its original community-based learning philosophy and moved towards a more timetabled and traditionally school-based format. Her conclusion was: “It was the pressure of the unconscious needs of the students that brought them [the staff] to modify their attitudes” when it came to Four Avenues’ original philosophy (Mellon, 1978: 15). Accompanying this thesis in the University of Canterbury Department of Education library were two large files containing artefacts and documents relating to Four Avenues. The first contained the written responses of staff members to a questionnaire devised by Mellon about the reasons they were attracted to Four Avenues, the challenges they faced in working there, and the reasons they left/remained in the school. The second contained more general artefacts related to Four Avenues—for example, the artwork of students at Four Avenues in the 1970s, school prospectuses, advertisements relating to Four Avenues. In this thesis, the later file is referred to as Mellon, 1978c, the former as Mellon 1978b.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>In quoting the words of specific individuals from these files, this thesis has referred to the files generically so as to maintain anonymity; for the information given by teachers, for example, was only intended for the purpose of use in Mellon’s (1978) study, not a later one.

The two Education Review Office audits, the Department of Education review and the Diploma of Education thesis of Mellon were the only writings I found on Four Avenues, journalistic coverage aside. In discussing Education Review Office (1992; 1993) audits and a Department of Education review (1979) on Four Avenues as “literature,” this section straddles the clearly demarcated boundaries between “primary” and “secondary” sources. Nevertheless, this is done because an analysis of what has been written about Four Avenues thus far enables an appreciation of the debates that surrounded it, and the way in which the present work makes a contribution to these debates and knowledge about Four Avenues.

This thesis contributes to knowledge about Four Avenues in the following ways:

- In relation to the two Education Review Office audits on Four Avenues in the 1990s, it takes up an issue that was not addressed or even raised in the last audit. In the space of a year, how did the situation at Four Avenues change so dramatically from 1992 (where it received a generally positive assessment by the Education Review Office) to 1993 (where it received one that was condemnatory)? The impression given in the Education Review Office audit of Four Avenues in 1993 is that the situation it found at Four Avenues happened in a vacuum. This thesis contributes to knowledge about Four Avenues by historically contextualising the situation the Education Review Office found in 1993, looking at what led to it and how relationships at all levels became so embittered.
- In terms of Mellon’s (1978) thesis, this thesis extends the scope of that work by encompassing the wider history of Four Avenues in its account. In other words, it looks at the opening of Four Avenues in 1975 and considers the social context in which that opening happened and discusses how that context contributed to Four Avenues’ establishment. Furthermore, beyond 1978, this thesis discusses the government’s relationship with Four Avenues from 1975 to 1982 and looks at how some of the pedagogical issues examined by Mellon affected this relationship, especially in terms of the Minister of Education’s decision to close Four Avenues in 1983.
- When it comes to the Department of Education (1979) review of Four Avenues, this thesis places the criticisms it made about Four Avenues’ teaching standards and organisation within the context of the preceding history of the school, showing how the problems the review identified were linked to, and affected by, issues that Four Avenues had experienced since opening in 1975. Furthermore, this thesis shows

how the genuine problems identified by the review made the presence of Four Avenues unattractive to actors within the Department of Education. This thesis, therefore, looks at how the problems identified by the 1979 review affected Four Avenues' relationship with the Department of Education and threatened its survival in the early 1980s.

The two Education Review Office audits of Four Avenues and the Department of Education Review can be understood as “interventions” in the school at particular points in time. Using Mellon's (1978; 1978b; 1978c) material as well as media sources, interviews, Ministry of Education records and so on, this thesis, structured around a series of turning points, provides an account of how these interventions were connected with Four Avenues' overall history in terms of how the school's place in the state education system was maintained and threatened over time.

## Chapter Outline

Chapter 2 offers a reflection on the methods used in this thesis. It outlines how I gathered coverage from *The Press* on Four Avenues, and it considers some issues in using newspapers as historical sources. This chapter considers the interviewing part of my research and it discusses some of the inherent limitations with oral history.<sup>6</sup> Chapter 2 further discusses the ethical problems involved in interviewing for this thesis, especially in relation to talking about the last year of Four Avenues' existence with participants. Chapter 2 also looks at the use of archival materials, correspondence and written documents in this thesis. It shows the overall rationale behind my research was to assess individual pieces of evidence according to different sources. Lastly, chapter 2 discusses the role of narrative and the “sociological imagination” in this thesis. Resources for story telling inherent in my direct or second-hand experience and the “sociological imagination” are used in this thesis to show that the question of Four Avenues' survival for 18 years was inseparable from the broader context of New Zealand educational history from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s.

Chapters 3 and 4 discuss the beginnings and establishment of Four Avenues. Chapter 3, first, provides an account of the first turning point in Four Avenues' history: the school's opening

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<sup>6</sup>Ironically, the work of Thompson (2000), the major theoretical manifesto of oral history, contains no definition of ‘oral history’. The definition of the *Collins Concise Dictionary* (2001) suffices for the purposes of this thesis: “**oral history** *n* the memories of living people about events or social conditions in their earlier lives taped and preserved as historical evidence” (1055).

in May 1975. It structures its account of this turning point around a description how Four Avenues was composed as an organisation in the six months between the Minister of Education's announcement of the Four Avenues' establishment in December 1974 and opening in May 1975. Included in this account is a discussion of what Four Avenues' original philosophy was and of how education was envisaged as occurring in it. Chapter 3 next discusses the social context in which Four Avenues emerged and how that context contributed to Four Avenues' establishment. Chapter 3 further discusses how the idea of establishing Four Avenues generated debates about the advantages and disadvantages of having the school as part of the state education system. This chapter shows how egalitarian sentiments among the members of Chippenham community, and the conviction that the state ought to provide a variety of approaches to education, had the ascendancy over arguments that Four Avenues should be a private alternative. Chapter 3 lastly considers what it was about the wider context of New Zealand education in the 1970s that contributed to Four Avenues' establishment. Four features of New Zealand education at the time, this chapter shows, contributed to the timeliness of Chippenham's proposal for establishing Four Avenues in the mid-1970s. Yet chapter 3 concludes by arguing they did not make Four Avenues' appearance on the New Zealand educational scene somehow historically inevitable or certain. Getting Four Avenues up and running still required the negotiation of many difficulties on the part of different actors.

The negotiation of some of these difficulties before Four Avenues opened is the focus of chapter 4. Chapter 4 focuses on one specific problem and looks at the way in which an important institutional actor in Four Avenues' establishment—the Department of Education—negotiated it. The problem was to do with the legal status of Four Avenues. Through the perspective provided by the correspondence of the Department of Education's District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools, chapter 4 introduces the legal problems surrounding the establishment of Four Avenues and provides an account of how they were resolved before it started. Chapter 4 further provides an overview of the Director General of Secondary Education's report on establishing Four Avenues. The Chippenham proposal could go ahead, the Director General argued, if an established secondary school in Christchurch was willing to make it an attachment of itself. From the start, Hagley High School was seen as the ideal candidate in this regard. Chapter 4 shows the Hagley Board eventually did accept attachment with Four Avenues and it looks at what affected Hagley's change of outlook. Lastly, this chapter considers why the Department of Education and the Hagley Board, which were not enthusiastic about Four Avenues from the start, expended a lot of effort in establishing the

school. The fact Four Avenues opened at all, this chapter suggests, was because of pressure by the Minister of Education on both these actors.

Chapter 5 discusses what led up to, and the circumstances surrounding, the second turning point in Four Avenues' history: the decision by the Department of Education to withdraw funding from Four Avenues and close it down in 1983. This chapter begins by outlining the Department's reasons for that decision. Beginning with the election of the Third National Government in 1975, chapter 5 traces how Four Avenues' survival was adversely affected by political developments in New Zealand from 1975 to 1982. It shows how the six-year tenure (1978 to 1984) of Merv Wellington as Minister of Education threatened Four Avenues' survival. Chapter 5 further looks at how three developments within Four Avenues from the mid-to-late 1970s influenced the Department of Education's decision to close the school. Chapter 5 lastly discusses Four Avenues' resistance to the Department of Education's attempts to close Four Avenues in the early 1980s. It highlights in detail four things that enabled Four Avenues to continue as a state school and shows how the election of the Fourth Labour Government in 1984 was crucial in terms of Four Avenues remaining a part of the state education system for the next decade.

Chapter 6 focuses on the third turning point in Four Avenues' history: the 1993 Education Review Office (1993) audit that recommended Four Avenues' closure and effectively sealed the school's fate. This chapter discusses what happened in the year or so between two Education Review Office (1992; 1993) audits to bring about Four Avenues' demise. It discusses how legislative and institutional reforms in the New Zealand compulsory education sector in the late 1980s and early 1990s fundamentally altered the long-standing relationship between Four Avenues and Hagley. Further, it looks at how the appointment of a new Director in 1990 contributed to conflict at Four Avenues. Chapter 6 argues that much of the conflict at Four Avenues in the early 1990s happened because people there believed the new Director and Hagley threatened all that they understood their school as embodying. Chapter 6 next discusses how the differences between Hagley Community College and Four Avenues were intensified in 1993 by Hagley's intervention in the conflict at Four Avenues between the Director and other staff members. It shows that Hagley Community College believed a rapprochement between Four Avenues and its Board of Trustees was realistic. The final part of chapter 6 discusses what led Hagley to quickly abandon this hope and sever all ties with Four Avenues. The breaking of these ties created the situation where the Ministry of Education accepted the Education Review Office's recommendation to close Four Avenues

because the school could not legally remain a part of the state education system without attachment to a local Christchurch high school.

Chapter 7 returns to the explicit consideration of the topical focus of this thesis—how Four Avenues' place in the state education system was maintained and threatened over 18-years—and provides a summary of chapters 3 to 6 around that problem. Highlighting three areas, this conclusion argues that three features of Four Avenues' history contributed to and threatened its place in the state education system over time. These were: 1) Four Avenues' relationship to wider political events and circumstances; 2) its relationship to Hagley High School; and 3) the commitment of many at Four Avenues to a particular understanding of Four Avenues' philosophy and identity. Four Avenues' ability to survive in the education system for 18-years was aided by favourable political circumstances and events. Yet Four Avenues' dependence on political circumstances and events made the school vulnerable in the sense that it was largely dependent throughout its history on the goodwill of whatever government was in power. Second, Hagley High School/Hagley Community College played an important and crucial role in Four Avenues remaining in the education system for 18 years. The Hagley Board was beneficial to Four Avenues' as long as organisational separateness practically existed between the two schools. When Hagley tried to do away with this separateness in the early 1990s, however, Four Avenues' place in the state education system was threatened because the two schools found themselves unable to work together. Thirdly, the high level of commitment on the part of many members of Four Avenues to a particular understanding of their school's philosophy provided Four Avenues with a degree of resilience as an organisation. Yet this commitment to a specific understanding of Four Avenues' philosophy also threatened the survival of Four Avenues at times. This happened in 1993 where the readiness on the part of many to defend their understanding of Four Avenues' identity in the face of what they saw as challenges to it from the Director and Hagley Community College led to conflict and Four Avenues' eventual end.

## **Conclusion**

The history of Four Avenues provided in this thesis focuses on the question of how Four Avenues maintained a place in the education system and of how that place was threatened over time. This introductory chapter has discussed how I became interested in this question through being a former student at Four Avenues. It has also discussed the “turning point” form of analysis used throughout this thesis and it has looked at two criticisms of this approach. Further, this chapter has reviewed what has been written on Four Avenues and discussed debates that surrounded the school from the mid-1970s to 1993. It has indicated how the topical focus of this thesis makes a contribution to those debates. Finally, this chapter has provided an indication of what the following chapters cover. Before discussing the history of Four Avenues in chapter 3, chapter 2 provides more of what this chapter has provided—prolegomena to that history. It provides a discussion of the methods used by me in researching Four Avenues.



## CHAPTER II

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### *Methodology*

#### **Introduction**

Chapter 2 provides a reflection on the methods used by me as a researcher in studying Four Avenues—hence, the title ‘methodology’. First, this chapter discusses how I went about gathering coverage from *The Press* on Four Avenues and considers some of the issues with reporting bias and using newspapers generally as historical sources. It discusses the problem of reporting bias in *The Press* in relation to Four Avenues and shows how this proved to be both a limitation and advantage in research. The second part of this chapter discusses the interviewing part of this research and describes how I selected, accessed and involved participants in this study. It discusses some of the inherent limitations in interviewing people about the past; nevertheless, it defends the value of oral history. This section also looks at the ethical issues involved in interviewing for this thesis, particularly when it came to talking about the last year of Four Avenues' existence with participants, and it discusses how I have handled much of the sensitive information provided by individuals. It further discusses the process I went through in developing questions for different interviews, and of how my skills as an interviewer improved as I went along. Third, this chapter discusses the use of archival materials, correspondence and written documents in this thesis. It outlines the four collections mainly drawn upon as historical sources on Four Avenues and it discusses problems to do with access to these collections and usage of them. This section indicates how these collections were analysed as historical sources and how they each helped me in addressing my research question. In discussing the usage of *The Press*, interviewing and documentary sources, this chapter indicates the overall rationale in the methods used was to assess individual pieces of evidence according to as many different sources as could be gathered. This helped me to avoid the idiosyncrasies in my different sources and it meant that my argument was not dependent on the bias of any one information source. The fourth part of this

chapter discusses the role of narrative and the “sociological imagination” (Mills, 1958) in the following chapters. Answering the research question of this thesis involved more than just describing what happened from different sources. Resources for story-telling inherent in my direct or second-hand experience and a degree of imagination were used this research to show how the issue of Four Avenues' 18-year survival in the state education system was inseparable from the broader context of New Zealand educational history from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s.

## **The Press**

### **Accessing Coverage of Four Avenues**

Four Avenues existed between the years of 1975 and 1993. Methods like participant observation were, for this reason, ruled out from the beginning. The school I was interested in was something in the past; consequently, the first part of my research involved constructing an outline of the school's history as it developed from the mid 1970s to the 1990s. How did Four Avenues' history develop over time? Who were some of the key actors? What role did they play? As a way of beginning to answer these sorts of questions, I familiarized myself with *The Press* (Christchurch, New Zealand) coverage of Four Avenues in the first four months of my research. I read and analysed 138 pieces from this source which were about the school, spanning a period of nearly 20 years. These pieces included articles, features, advertisements, editorials and letters to the editor. From this reading, I gained an initial picture of Four Avenues' history along with many of the main struggles it confronted as a school. My ability to piece this coverage together was helped immensely by the fact the Canterbury Public Library had a thorough index of all the times “Four Avenues” was mentioned in *The Press*. Without this aid it would have been almost impossible to do it in the time I did.

### **Reporting Bias**

In using newspapers as primary sources, the issue of reporting bias emerged along with the problem of how to identify it in using them as a source of knowledge. Historian Paul

Thompson (2000) observes that “Few historians would deny the bias in contemporary reporting or accept what the press says at face value, but in using newspapers to construct the past much less caution is normally shown” (119). This is because it is very rare to be able to detect in any detailed way the potential sources of distortion in newspapers; and this difficulty only increases as newspapers become increasingly older. It may be possible to identify the owner of the newspaper at a particular time, and perhaps identify the general political and social outlook of his or her newspaper, but whether the (frequently anonymous) contributor of a particular piece shared that outlook can scarcely ever be more than surmised. Thus using the press as historical evidence suffers not only from the very real possibility of inaccuracy at its source, which is usually an eyewitness account or an interview report by a journalist. The evidence is also selected, shaped and filtered through a particular, but to the later researcher, unclear bias. Moreover, not only are the potential biases of the reporter by and large uncertain, newspaper pieces are themselves shaped by a process of production that begins with the journalist and ends with the editor-in-chief. Identifying bias in journalism is therefore more complex than trying to establish a linkage between a reporter’s (and the editor’s or newspaper owner’s) predispositions and what is printed.

A difficulty in detecting bias in newspapers is also because the presentation of a newspaper often engenders in its readers the experience that what they are reading really occurred and that what they perceive is simply matter-of-fact description (Smith, 1978: 177). Much of the legitimacy and prestige that various newspapers still have is therefore derived from the fact that they trade on the common-sense distinction between facts and interpretation. As Martin (1964) puts it:

It is necessary to preserve the *formula* of true-facts-distinct from-free-comment-simple advocacy is less effective and not what people buy newspapers for—as it is to destroy the substance, the real tension between commentary and report which always guarantees the good faith of a newspaper (85).

The field of journalism describes itself, justifies its activities, and predicates its values to the community in terms of what Bourdieu calls “autonomous principles” (Bourdieu, 1998). These principles, which are usually articulated in professional codes of ethics, often include a commitment to truthfulness, accuracy and freedom of speech, the public’s right to know, impartial reporting and independence. Theoretically, they inform and even dictate all aspects of the journalist’s work, including what should constitute news, how it is reported and

gathered and whose opinions are sought and authorised.

In *Acts of Resistance* (1998),<sup>7</sup> Bourdieu shows how journalism is a field composed of governing bodies, rules and regulations and forms of discourse that both influence practitioners and evaluate their activities. In the journalistic field, practitioners usually have many possibilities to choose from (for example, from which angle to write a story, what questions to pose during an interview), but they know their actions will be judged by the field and its standards and values. This is true of all practitioners in the field of journalism, he argues—even such media magnates as Rupert Murdoch (which means that newspapers in Murdoch’s stable, like *The Times*, cannot directly be a platform for his own personal views, but must maintain a measure of impartiality if they are to be taken as “serious” journalism).

At the very least, the *performance* of a commitment to the principles of the journalistic field and its standards of evaluation is required. Journalism, however, differs from other fields such as art and academia in one important way, Bourdieu (1998a) points out: “it is much more dependent on external forces than other fields of cultural production ... It depends very directly on demand since ... it is subject to the decrees of the market and opinion poll” (53). In other words, because newspapers are run predominantly as businesses, the “bottom line” for any text produced by journalists is whether or not it has a market.

The embeddedness of journalism in the market has two major consequences in terms of reporting, Bourdieu (1998a) claims. First, while those within the journalistic field theoretically comply with its standards of evaluation, in practice this is frequently not the case. Journalism “has no equivalent of the sort of immanent justice in the scientific world that censures those individuals who break certain rules and rewards those who abide by them with the esteem of their peers” (Bourdieu, 1998a: 53). Breaking or abiding by the rules, writing ill-informed or intelligently analytical articles, being ignored or cited by other journalists—all this means relatively little in terms of the wider imperatives and principles of the journalistic field. The bottom line rather is “Will this sell? Journalists can sometimes engage in practices that can be considered at best exploitative and ethically dubious to fulfil the demand for saleable copy.

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<sup>7</sup>Bourdieu, of course, was speaking of his own context of France and the European Union in talking about the media. So much of his analysis is regionally specific. Nevertheless, with the globalisation of the electronic and print media through multi-national corporations like Fox, News Limited, and INL and so on, much of Bourdieu’s analysis has applicability to New Zealand too.

While exploitative and ethically dubious activities can produce negative consequences for a newspaper and a journalist, a transgression of the implicit rules of the journalistic field does not necessarily translate into a negative evaluation within that field, either for a paper or a journalist. The adage that “there is no such thing as bad publicity” is particularly apt with regard to most areas of journalism.

According to Bourdieu, the second consequence of market domination of the journalistic field in terms of reporting is a general lack of accountability. Newspapers can provide accounts of, or make predictions about public matters such as elections, government policies, strikes, demonstrations, economic trends or foreign affairs. Yet these accounts or predictions are never usually called to account (particularly, not by other journalists). Bourdieu (1998a) calls this lack of responsibility:

The prediction game, made possible by a collective amnesia about current events. Not only are these predictions and diagnoses easy to make (like bets on sports events) but they can be made with total impunity, protected as the predictor is by the rapidity with which the journalistic report is forgotten amid the rapid turnover over events (6).

In other words, the accuracy or acuity of a journalistic text is, in a sense, largely unimportant. What matters more is the extent to which reports create headlines or sensationalise events, for amid the rapid turnover of events, questions over the accuracy of a particular piece can be frequently disregarded (Bourdieu, 1998a: 6).

### **Reporting Bias and Four Avenues**

In analysing *The Press*' coverage of Four Avenues, I kept in mind two questions as a researcher: what were the potential sources of bias in this coverage? And how did that bias affect its presentation of Four Avenues? With regard to the first question, I found journalists within *The Press* were supportive of Four Avenues from the mid-1970s and that this support was reflected in the coverage it provided of the school. Walter Logeman, the main author of the proposal for Four Avenues that was submitted to the government in 1973, refers to this support when he claims one particular article in *The Press* was influential in prompting the Department of Education into speeding up the establishment of Four Avenues:

And in the end too, the one article, you may find it still: 'Dept of Education Delays Experimental School.' They didn't like being the ones who delayed it. The government had approved it or something like that and that really got it all moving that article in the paper. It [Four Avenues] just romped in after that (interview, 20 May 2002).

An editorial writer in *The Press* also had a personal connection with Four Avenues through his own sons, who attended the school. Former Four Avenues staff member Neil McLeod speaks of the association between Four Avenues and *The Press* in the following way:

The thing to remember about alternative schools is that the more someone knows and understands about the school, the more sensible it seems and the more support it gets. Only right-wing fanatics remain opposed to the democratic ideals. The education reporter at the Christchurch *Press* was well informed and a good supporter. One of the editorial writers was impressed enough to enrol both his sons. The paper always gave us a sympathetic write-up and knew the benefit the school was contributing to so many Christchurch teenagers (interview, 22 September, 2002).

This association between Four Avenues and people in the local Christchurch media helps us to understand why in 1983 when Four Avenues was faced with the prospect of closure *The Press* had three editorials arguing for its retention in the state system. Furthermore, this connection helps us to understand why *The Press*' coverage of Four Avenues often focused on the "human interest" side of the school—for example, stories of students who had been unhappy in their previous schools but had flourished and developed in the environment of Four Avenues. Actors within the Christchurch media were not disinterested parties or indifferent spectators when it came to Four Avenues. As individuals, some of them had a stake in the success or lack of success of Four Avenues, because their children's education was involved. This absence of indifference on the part of certain actors in *The Press* is one of the reasons why it generally provided Four Avenues a supportive and "sympathetic write-up" as Neil McLeod puts it.

In relation to the second question of how the bias of *The Press* affected its coverage of Four Avenues, I found the paper often uncritically reproduced the perspectives of agents within Four Avenues. For example, in 1993 *The Press* did this in its initial reporting and coverage of

the dispute between Hagley Community College and Four Avenues over Hagley's dismissal of the Four Avenues management committee. One article implicitly cast Four Avenues as the victim of coercion by its larger partner, Hagley (Espiner, 1993d). This article presented the belief of many staff at Four Avenues that Hagley in its dealings with their school had a hidden “agenda” which it was not disclosing. As chapter 6 shows, media coverage like this contributed to, and intensified, the growing rift between the two schools in 1993.

This highlights the problem mentioned earlier with newspaper coverage as an historical source. The way newspaper reports are generally written cause one to ignore the fact that *somebody* is always standing *somewhere*, with a particular *point of view* when they are reporting (Wright, 1992: 89).<sup>8</sup> By the way they are structured (for instance, in their successive quoting of different positions on an issue) newspaper reports often give the impression they are providing a “view from nowhere” rather than a view from somewhere (Nagal, 1986). As with the other sources discussed later in this chapter—personal papers, archival material, interviews—this does not mean the knowledge offered by *The Press* on Four Avenues is without value, it means the knowledge of this source needs to be assessed in the light of knowledge from others.

### Use of the Press

In the absence of any secondary materials on Four Avenues, a reading of *The Press*’ coverage of Four Avenues was an important preparatory step in my research; for I needed an appreciation of how the school developed over time to develop specific lines of inquiry in relation to it. Bloch (1964) argues a preliminary reading of contemporaneous sources like newspapers is a useful technique in enabling a researcher to develop some broad understandings and questions about an event. It is extremely difficult to assess the import, for instance, of other primary sources in relation to an event and understand how they might challenge or modify understandings of it without some prior knowledge for comparison and evaluation. That staff at *The Press* had a personal interest and involvement in Four Avenues also meant I could not treat its reporting as relatively impartial—that is, as if it was relatively uninvolved directly in the history of Four Avenues. *The Press* itself was a significant *actor* in the school’s 18-year history and the analysis of chapters 3, 5 and 6 indicate some of the ways

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<sup>8</sup>This point is made in the context of a lengthy chapter on historical epistemology, which is indebted for its argument to the work of Polanyi (1958).

in which this was so.

## ***Interviewing***

The second part of research for this thesis involved a number of interviews with former staff members at Four Avenues and the Deputy Principal of Hagley Community College between the months of May to November 2002. I conducted 7 semi-structured interviews for this thesis where I spent between 40-50 minutes with a person, asking them specific pre-prepared questions relating to their experience of Four Avenues and the events which I was concerned with investigating in detail. All of these interviews were recorded on cassette and transcribed into written form.

### **Selection, Access, Involving Participants**

The selection method used in getting interview participants for this thesis largely involved a *snow-balling* method. Before beginning the interview stage, I composed a list of former staff members at Four Avenues—those mentioned in *The Press* coverage of Four Avenues and those I could remember from my time at Four Avenues in 1991 and 1992. I also conducted an Internet search with the combined terms “Four Avenues” and “school” and found the names and contact details of two former staff members at Four Avenues. Using the *Christchurch Telephone Directory*, I contacted potential participants in my list using either mail, email or telephone. After an initial scoping discussion either in person or telephone (lasting between 15-20 minutes), where I outlined to potential participants the nature of my research and what an interview would involve in terms of time and questions, I arranged a time with them and interviewed them. Scoping discussions with participants were an important part of the interviewing process in my research, for they enabled me to determine the time individual participants were at Four Avenues, and thus make the questions raised with them during the full interview more appropriate to the time-period they were at the school. Also, the scoping discussions were useful in developing lines of inquiry during the full interview, which I may have been largely unprepared for without initial discussion with a participant. For example, during one of these discussions, I was told by one participant of the support the education reporter for *The Press* gave Four Avenues in the mid-1970s. In the subsequent full interview,



we were able to discuss this support in more detail.

One of the disadvantages I found with scoping discussions was that during these largely informal conversations participants would typically relate a rich amount of information that was not as effectively conveyed by them in the second telling—that is, in the context of a more formal interview situation where a specific question, or line of questioning, would be used to elicit the information again. During three interviews, I got the response in relation to a particular question that “we’ve discussed this before” and they would *add to* what they said in the previous discussion without going over in detail what they said previously. One participant realised this during an interview and said, “Of course, it’s being taped now!” and then tried to relate the substance of what they said in the previous conversation. Yet in the second telling, the information conveyed lacked the detail the spontaneity of the previous conversation afforded it. During these interviews, it was difficult to recapture the richness of the first telling, even though the three participants attempted to do this. To mitigate this problem, therefore, I lessened the time of the scoping discussion down to 10-15 minutes<sup>9</sup> and more or less just related the nature of my research and asked individuals whether they would be interested in participating.

The opportunity to interview two of my participants came about by coincidence. For example, one participant I interviewed for this thesis lived in Auckland. Although other former staff members at Four Avenues knew he lived there, they did not have his contact details. However, through informally talking about my research with a sociology PhD candidate at the University of Canterbury, I was referred to a friend of this participant who had his contact details. I was thus able to contact this person and interview him. Also, it was through a later encounter in a local Christchurch bookshop with a person I interviewed for this thesis in May 2002 that I was provided with the contact details of someone who served on Hagley Board of Governors when Four Avenues was established. Through contacting this suggested person, I gained access to a number of documents and papers relating to Four Avenues in the 1970s and 1980s that have been extensively used in chapters 3, 4 and 5. It was coincidences like these that helped me progress in finding participants for this thesis.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>My first two scoping discussions with participants were over an hour. This had the advantage of creating an atmosphere of informality and confidence between us. But it meant these first two discussions were interviews virtually, only missing the tape-recorder.

<sup>10</sup>Becker (1998: 28-35) talks of how there is something of an aversion to the imagery of “chance” and “coincidence” in much conventional social science discourse. The irony of this, he notes, is that in speaking of their experiences, many sociologists do not use the highly deterministic language that they employ in speaking of other people, yet for other people, they speak as if this language worked as an explanation (32).

## Issues in Interviewing

The kind of information gathered during these semi-structured interviews was *oral history*. According to the *New Oxford Shorter English Dictionary*, oral history is “tape recorded historical information drawn from the speaker's personal knowledge; the use of this as an academic subject” (quoted in Thompson, 2000: xi). The criteria for selecting participants in my research was to speak to between 7 to 9 former coordinators at Four Avenues who were at the school at *different points* in its 18-year history. Thus I attempted to get at least two participants who were at Four Avenues at the time of its establishment in the 1970s, at least two who were at the school during the time the Department of Education tried to close down Four Avenues in 1983 and at least two who were involved in Four Avenues at the time it closed in 1993. Of course, all who participated in this thesis by providing interviews did not fall into these neat categories of selection. One participant, for example, was at Four Avenues from 1978 to 1980, after Four Avenues was established and before the Department of Education threatened to close it in 1983. Another interviewed was at Four Avenues from the late 1970s until it closed in 1993. The Hagley Deputy Principal also was not a staff member at Four Avenues, but someone involved with the Hagley Board of Trustees during the time the relationship between Hagley Community College and Four Avenues deteriorated.

The noticeable feature about all of the interviews provided for this thesis is that they are, like the questionnaires done for Mellon's (1978) thesis, oral history “from the teacher's point of view.” While the perspectives of former teachers at Four Avenues are reproduced and incorporated into the discussion of this thesis, the perspectives of former students are much less prominent and largely mediated through written sources—newspaper features, documents relating to Four Avenues. As Swidler (1978: 4) and Bidwell (1965: 973) point out, the perspectives offered by teachers and students are not the same, even in alternative schools where the asymmetry between them is often lessened. In the course of my research, I discovered this about Four Avenues when I informally talked to former students at Four Avenues about their experience of the school.

What then justified the decision not to seek former students as participants for this research? There was largely one reason for this decision. Former coordinators, and especially former directors at Four Avenues, had more knowledge of the *organisational dynamics* of Four Avenues and the relationships the school had with outside actors. In terms of the focus of this thesis—how was Four Avenues' place in the education system was maintained and threatened

over time—I targeted former coordinators because their position and responsibilities within Four Avenues brought them more directly into contact with the issue I was concerned with in my research. For example, when it came to the establishment of Four Avenues I interviewed Marion Hobbs and Walter Logeman—both former coordinators at Four Avenues who were directly involved in its establishment—rather than students from 1975. The perspectives provided by students at Four Avenues at this time perhaps would have been valuable in discussing how the school was established, but I interviewed these people because they were more *knowledgeable* at this point. When it came to researching the other two points in Four Avenues' history discussed in this thesis, I used a similar kind of rationale in looking for participants, asking who was directly involved and what contribution they could make.

The value in oral history is that it conveys the essential *connectedness* of aspects of daily life during a time under question, which the researcher from other sources of knowledge tends to know otherwise as discrete facts (Tosh, 1991: 210).<sup>11</sup> Through using it, I have tried to show something of how Four Avenues formed a total social environment for individuals and capture that. By using former staff members at Four Avenues as participants, I have tried to give Four Avenues a “human face.” However, there are limitations with oral history and these should be mentioned. First, oral history is not a pure distillation of past experience, for in an interview about the past both interviewee and interviewer are affected by the presence of the other (Tosh, 1991: 213). As a researcher, I selected the informant; and as an interviewer, I indicated the areas of interest during the interview. The presence of me as a researcher affected the atmosphere in which participants recalled their experiences during an interview. The interviews for this thesis, therefore, were both conditioned by my position as an academic researcher in relation to different participants, and by the terms in which I analysed the history of Four Avenues—which I may have unwittingly communicated to participants. In other words, as a researcher, I had a large role in creating the oral testimony used here.

A further weakness with oral history is that participants in providing the material for it are not in direct touch with the past. The memories of a participant, however, precise or vivid, are filtered through subsequent experience. They are affected by what he or she has absorbed from other sources and they can be affected by nostalgia or a sense of grievance or deprivation. Feelings and attitudes of nostalgia and grievance are precisely the things that give oral testimony its pathos. Yet these things may be more conditioned by later (and/or previous) experience rather than the period in question (Tosh, 1991: 213). The notion, therefore, of a

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<sup>11</sup>Largely for the discussion in this section, I am indebted to the work of Tosh (1991).

direct encounter with the past is largely an illusion and perhaps nowhere more than in the case of testimony from hindsight. The “voice of the past” (Thompson, 2000) is inescapably the voice of the present too.

Yet even supposing the “voice of the past” is not conditioned by the present, it is still inadequate as a representation of the past. For social reality comprises more than the sum of individual experiences.<sup>12</sup> It is no disparagement to individuality to say that our lives are largely spent in situations that from our subjective experience we cannot fully comprehend (Berger, 1963). How individuals perceive the world around them may or may not amount to a viable basis for living, but it never corresponds to reality in its entirety. Access to a much wider range of evidence than was available to people involved in Four Avenues enabled me to consider some of the wider processes and structures which were operative in the lives of my participants while they were at Four Avenues.

The vividness of personal experience, which is the strength of oral history, points to the limitation with it: the tendency of the researcher to be confined to the categories provided by participants. It is not that they are “mistaken,” rather it is that they are more confined than they could be. As Abrams (1982) puts it:

The close encounter may make the voices louder; it ... does not make their meaning clearer. To that end, we must turn back from “their” meanings to our own and to the things we know about them which they did not know, or say, about themselves (331).

The discussion of the limitations with the kind of interviewing done for this thesis is not intended to belittle the contribution and the value of the information participants provided. Rather, it has indicated how the source of oral testimony, like other sources, requires critical analysis; and that it needs to be appropriated along with other available sources. In other words, the caveats about the “biases” of *The Press* above apply to this source too. The interviews for this thesis provide, along with newspaper coverage and documentary materials, another set of artefacts for the writing of a history of Four Avenues.

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<sup>12</sup>The formulation of this sentence is indebted to Durkheim's first “rule of sociological method”: “The first and most fundamental rule is: *consider social facts as things*” (Quoted in Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 30, emphasis original). In other words, the social systems in which individuals are embedded possess “objective facticity” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 30).

## Ethical Issues in Interviewing

Since I would be interviewing former staff members at Four Avenues in their *professional capacity* at the school (albeit in their *past* professional capacity), approval by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee was given for me to directly attribute interview material quoted in this thesis to the individuals who provided it.<sup>13</sup> When participants signed the consent forms, they were aware that if something was quoted from their interview it would be directly attributed to them without the use of a pseudonym. The decision to directly attribute the material provided by former staff members directly to them was for two reasons. First, I was interviewing my participants in their role as coordinators at Four Avenues. The employment capacity of “coordinator” was a public not a private role. Secondly, after discussions with the Human Ethics Committee, it was agreed that with a school as small and intimate as Four Avenues anonymity for participants could not be guaranteed. For this reason, one former staff member I approached for an interview declined to be involved in my research. It was attractive under these circumstances to make an “exception” to the policy of directly attributing material to individuals just to have the involvement of certain people. However, to do this would have been unfair to those who volunteered information in the knowledge that what they said would be attributed to them.

In the consent forms, I guaranteed participants the information they provided would remain confidential. No other participant would see or hear about what another participant said to me during his or her interview. If I quoted from a particular interview transcript, I asked if the participant was comfortable with having these words attributed to them in the thesis. If they were not, I did not use these words. This concession was largely made because I did not provide participants with anonymity, and because many participants expressed opinions about individuals at Four Avenues that they did not want attributed to them in print. I have also deliberately excluded this kind of material in this thesis to protect the reputation of the individual talked about.<sup>14</sup>

For these reasons, I have not used material from two interviewees when it came to Four

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<sup>13</sup>When it came to the possibility of including former students at Four Avenues, the Human Ethics Committee approved my research on the condition that if students were quoted in this thesis from interviews then they would be provided anonymity with a single-name pseudonym. This condition was stipulated because students were not at Four Avenues in a professional capacity but in a personal one.

<sup>14</sup>An aphorism of sociologist W. G. Runciman (1998) has been a helpful guide in this regard: “Don't get hung up on who did what when to whom, but spot what it is in the environment in which they did it that explains why they did it as they did” (153-54).

Avenues in the early 1990s and the period discussed in chapter 6. This material made a number of claims at length about the actions and conduct of the Director of Four Avenues at this time which they were not comfortable having it any of it attributed to them. The reluctance of a former staff member at Four Avenues to be involved in this research, and the unwillingness of two people who participated in it to have some of their material on Four Avenues in the 1990s directly attributed to them, shows something of the grievance many still feel ten years after the events described in chapter 6. As a researcher, the concessions I made to participants in terms of the material used from them was a way of demonstrating sensitivity to the grievance many still feel about this time.

### **Use of Questions**

The method of selecting participants—interviewing former staff at Four Avenues from different points in time—largely determined the kinds of questions I posed to individuals during an interview. The questions for discussion were prepared in the light of the time a participant was involved in Four Avenues. For some this was a period spanning two decades; for others, a period of less than three years. In each interview, the schedule was not rigidly followed and the amount of time a participant spent in answering a question was left largely to their discretion. In the 45-50 minute time, no attempt was made to rush participants through all the pre-prepared questions, and often an interview would finish with only a few of them covered. As an interviewer, I tried to provide interviewees the opportunity to discuss matters that were *important to them* about Four Avenues, even if this meant a significant departure from my list of pre-prepared questions. For example, during one interview in response to the first two questions on my list, a participant kept returning to the theme of how there was a disparity between the ideal of Four Avenues and its “reality in practice.” This was something significant, so I departed from my list of questions and asked him to explain what he meant by that perception and the reason he came to develop it in his time at Four Avenues.

The last sentence gives the impression I was a competent interviewer from the start of my research on Four Avenues. Yet the opposite was really the case. I gained the capacity to make a decision like this during this interview from previous interviews that did not go too well at points. For example, in two interviews, I rushed through questions or went on to another one too quickly because of a long pause in interaction, not realising this is the pace at which a

person might think and respond. Furthermore, too many questions during my interviews were redundant because they arguably expected too much of the participants. The Hagley Deputy Principal, for example, ended an answer to a question posed to him by a comment about the 1992 Education Review Office (1992) audit of Four Avenues being rather superficial in its assessment. I then asked, “What exactly was superficial about it?” For a report this person only read once or twice at most *over 10 years ago*, this was perhaps expecting too much.

As I progressed in interviewing, I learned the importance of asking “what and “how” questions rather than “why” questions when it came to getting participants to discuss their time at Four Avenues. For example, with three interviewees when I asked the question, “Why do you think Merv Wellington [the Minister of Education] wanted to close Four Avenues [in 1983]? The answer was brief and generally preceded by an expression of uncertainty. As Becker (1998) points out, such a question is “asking for a cause, maybe even causes” that many interviewees do not feel comfortable speculating about, especially in the presence of a researcher (59). However, when I prompted one of these three interviewees to tell me how a personal meeting with Merv Wellington went in 1983, he answered at length and told me something with informative detail, because this was something that he could speak with *authority* on.

While these kinds of questions “gave people more leeway, were less constraining” and invited “them to answer in any way that suited them,” as Becker (1998: 59) puts it, I still received short replies to many of these kinds of questions. Mainly the reason was because the memory of Four Avenues for some of my participants was well over 20 years old. During one interview, for example, one participant often prefaced his replies by apologising about his inability to recall specific events or the sequence in which they happened. Nevertheless, what was most helpful in this interview was the way in which he characterised a *recurrent perception*—the belief Four Avenues abandoned its “school without philosophy.” The major limitation with the way I conducted many of my interviews was that many of the questions I asked participants were designed to evoke a description of specific events and the way they transpired. As I progressed, I found this was something the analysis of documentary sources was better at providing. However, once I recognised that the strength of oral history lay in *the characterisation of recurrent experiences*, interviews that I felt were disappointing in terms of my initial ends became more valuable as a source of knowledge.

## *Documents*

### **Records and Access**

The documents and papers on Four Avenues used for this thesis come from four sources. First, they come from the Bruce Barclay Papers stored in the University of Canterbury's Macmillan Brown Library.<sup>15</sup> Bruce Barclay was a Labour MP and the materials of his in the Macmillan Brown Library relate to his activities as a constituency MP in the late 1970s. The material relating to Four Avenues is largely correspondence between him and individual parents at Four Avenues. In 1978, parents and staff at Four Avenues were concerned that the lease for their school's Gloucester Street building was expiring at the end of that year and that Four Avenues would be without accommodation in 1979. Parents believed this situation would be a convenient excuse for the educational authorities to close Four Avenues. Members of Four Avenues thus contacted Barclay in an attempt to gain his support in retaining Four Avenues in the education system. In writing on behalf of members of Four Avenues, Barclay corresponded with the Minister of Education and the Department of Education's Regional Southern Office Superintendent of Secondary Schools.

The second source of records for Four Avenues came from the Archives New Zealand Collection. The Four Avenues records held in Archives New Zealand mainly contained: 1) equipment records and grants to the school; 2) background materials to do with the beginning of Four Avenues; 3) Department of Education Inspectorate reports on Four Avenues; 4) data and statistics relating to Four Avenues; 5) correspondence between the Department of Education and Four Avenues. These five Department of Education files started with the proposal for the Community Participation Project, authored by the Chippenham Community (No Date) in 1972/3, and went through to the mid-1980s. The third source of records on Four Avenues was Ministry of Education operations records dating from the beginning of 1989 through to early 1994. Documents in these files correspond roughly with the disestablishment of the Department of Education under the Education Act 1989 and the establishment of the Ministry of Education.

Accessing these records involved making a written request for use and guaranteeing I would not identify in my thesis the individual names of any persons contained the documents. This requirement was consistent with intent of the Privacy Act 1993, which legislates that

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<sup>15</sup>Reference Number: MB 50, Box 4b.



identifying information about persons held by a government public service for a particular purpose generally cannot be used for a different purpose. The Ministry of Education was also concerned about my research and the ends to which I intended to put the information contained in the files on Four Avenues. They were especially concerned I would take the accusations made against Four Avenues' last Director and the Principal of Hagley Community College in 1993 as "factual" claims that I would then reproduce in my thesis, suggesting this is what "really happened."

Addressing the Ministry's concerns at this point involved justifying why I would be interested in reading materials that made a number of accusations against staff and individuals involved in Four Avenues. I justified my interest in these materials by arguing I would read the Ministry of Education Operations Files on two levels. First, I was interested in the documentation because the succession of letters, memorandums, and facsimiles and so on would help me to establish a detailed picture of what happened at Four Avenues in 1993 and how it developed. The day-to-day transactions would help me to form a detailed picture of what happened at this time.

Furthermore, I was interested in the materials contained in these records because I believed they would assist me gaining an understanding of some of the attitudes and perspectives surrounding Four Avenues in the early 1990s. Not only would they be valuable in terms of reconstructing what happened at Four Avenues, they would also be valuable in terms of indicating the ways in which people comprehended what happened at Four Avenues. Much of the documentation I found in these Ministry of Education records on Four Avenues reflected the perspectives and concerns of the Ministry during Four Avenues' falling out with Hagley Community College. Therefore, in terms of a more detailed understanding of how Four Avenues became a divided community in 1993, I maintained it was important to familiarise myself with materials that reflected perceptions and claims different from those of the Ministry of Education and others sympathetic to its outlook. Leaving aside the issue of whether the accusations contained in some documents had any "factual basis," it was important I at least attempt understand some of the voices not overwhelmingly represented. The letters containing accusations against the last Director of Four Avenues and members of Hagley Community College were thus not important for me in that they contained certain allegations. They were significant because they illustrated the depth of the suspicion within Four Avenues and the attitudes towards the Director and Hagley Community College in 1993. My interest in the documentation was not to speculate on the "truthfulness" of these

allegations, but to learn of some of the ways in which antagonism towards the Director and Hagley developed in Four Avenues. The conditions of my use of the Ministry of Education Operations Files were the same as the conditions placed on my use of the Archives New Zealand material: I had to make a written request for use and guarantee to not to publish the individual names of any persons contained in the files.

The fourth source of records on Four Avenues came from the personal papers of individuals associated with the school throughout its 18-year history—former staff members, parents of students active in the administration of the school. Two participants in my research lent me their personal papers on Four Avenues. These two collections of documents contained much material that was not found in the Department and Ministry of Education's institutional records on Four Avenues. For example, I found weekly school newsletters in these collections and I found material and correspondence relating to Four Avenues in the early 1980s, which was largely absent from the Archives New Zealand records. In Shirley Croll's papers, I also found a partial copy of the Department of Education (1979) review of Four Avenues in the late 1970s, finding a reference to Mellon's (1978) Diploma of Education thesis—which I was able to follow up. The use of these collections proved invaluable, for the materials they contained were broader than the more circumscribed institutional and administrative concerns of the Department and Ministry of Education records. For the sake of consistency, I have avoided referring to the names of individuals who authored, who were addressed or who were mentioned in the documents in these personal papers.

### **Analysing the Documents**

The method of analysis used in studying these four collections was that of *internal criticism*—interpretation of content. In looking at a document, it was not simply a matter of separating “fact” from “bias” (contra Bell, 1999: 115). As with *The Press*, every document in these collections was written by *someone* standing *somewhere*, with a particular *point of view*. Fact and perspective, in other words, could not be tidily separated and neither, arguably, was it desirable to attempt to do so. The almost exclusive focus on administrative and organizational details in the Archives New Zealand and Ministry of Education records often gave the impression they were providing an objective “view from nowhere” (compare Nagal, 1986). In comparison with the impassioned, committed language of many teachers and parents at Four Avenues, material from actors in the Department of Education, Ministry of Education and

Hagley Community College sounded “impartial” and “objective.” There was little sense of grievance in it, as there was in much of the correspondence from members of Four Avenues in 1993. It was less *heated*, and therefore seemed more objective and reliable as evidence. With the impassioned language and arguments of materials of people at Four Avenues, it was relatively easy to recognize “where they were coming from.” The authors of the documents in the Archives New Zealand and Ministry of Education records rarely declared their assumptions or outlook explicitly.

Therefore, the task I set myself in analysing these four kinds of collections was to identify implicit perspectives and assumptions, wherever possible. I did this by looking for terms that suggested partisanship and asked whether the evidence supplied from other documents supported the author's views and arguments. The inseparability of fact from perspective in all the documents was also valuable. Often documents that were impassioned in their arguments, and that did not try to feign even the appearance of impartiality, indicated *the views* of individuals and groups at the time they were written. Inferences could still be drawn from these documents about the history of Four Avenues and conflicts within it, even if the factual basis for the claims of many of these documents was questionable. In addition, as chapter 6 shows, the bias of certain documents from Hagley Community College is historically significant. In the early 1990s, they indicate how the Hagley Board of Trustees' misreading of the situation at Four Avenues at times contributed to, and intensified, the bitterness between it and Four Avenues.

In practising internal criticism, I attempted to empathize with the authors of different documents and understand things from their different perspectives as much as possible. Why might have they seen things the way did? I asked. Instead of accepting one author's view, and arriving at early conclusions, I tried to balance it with the perspectives of other documents to both test its own biases *as well as my own*. As Bell (1999) observes: “It is easier to recognize bias in others than it is in ourselves, and it is tempting to reject evidence that does not support our case” (115). By using as many sources as possible, I tried to lessen the possibility of the perspectives of individual sources becoming too dominant in the argument of this thesis as well as lessen the possibility of myself as a researcher showing partiality towards individual sources.

In analysing newspaper materials, interviews and documents, I have also used what Bloch (1966) calls the *regressive method*. That is, I have taken materials written at a later point in

time and used them to understand a previous point in time in Four Avenues' history. In developing this method, Bloch (1966) wanted to reconstruct the conditions of rural French society during the middle Ages. The documents for the period he was concerned about contained much information, but little sense of how the details fitted together to form an overall picture. Such a picture only emerged in the eighteenth century, when French agrarian life was systematically described by agronomists and commissions of enquiry, and when more accurate maps began to appear in large numbers. Bloch maintained that only someone familiar with the structure of French rural society as it was in the eighteenth century could make sense of the medieval sources. He did not argue that nothing had changed in the meantime; rather that in this kind of situation a researcher could work back by stages from what is known at a later stage to make sense of the fragmentary and small evidence from earlier stages:

The historian ... is perpetually at the mercy of his [sic] documents; most of the time he must read history backwards if he hopes to break the secret cipher of the past (Bloch, 1966: xxviii).

The regressive method is regarded by many researchers and historical theorists as a method which contravenes normal practice when it comes to using historical evidence (Tosh, 1991: 70). However, if used carefully, it enables generalizations about points in Four Avenues' history for which a large amount of material is lacking.

### ***From Turning Points to Connected Narrative/s***

The discussion of the three turning points or events in Four Avenues' history provided in this thesis involves not only the analysis of how they happened and of how they had the outcome that they did have. It also involves the analysis of what these three events—the establishment of Four Avenues, the Department of Education's decision to close Four Avenues in 1983 and the prospect of Four Avenues' closure in 1993—meant to actors involved (of course, 'meant' should be in the present tense 'mean' also, because the research for this thesis has involved interviews with people well after these events happened). In the language of Collingwood's (1956) classic study of the philosophy of history, the analysis here tries to look at the “inside” of these events too. In other words, the description of what individuals involved thought they were doing, wanted to do, or tried to do. The aim of this thesis, therefore, is not to assemble

little clumps of “facts” and hope that somebody else will integrate them (Wright, 1992: 113). Its aim is to show something of their interconnectedness, that is, how one thing follows another, precisely by examining something of the “inside” of events. “And the model, for such connections,” Wright (1992) says, “is not that of random atoms cannoning into one other. It is that of the full interplay of human life—the complex network of human aims, intentions and motivations, operating within and at the edge of the worldviews of different communities and the mindsets of different individuals” (113). To show some of these connections, the following four chapters develop a narrative.

Mills (1958) claimed sociology was a form of *imagination* that linked “history and biography.” The term “sociological imagination” has been so oft used, and invoked like a talisman, that it has become trivialised. Nevertheless, I refer to it because this thesis does something central to what Mills saw the sociological imagination as encompassing: the imaginative reconstruction of the texture of a form of social life that has largely passed away (Giddens, 1982: 16).

In this respect, Mills believed there was little distinction between the craft of the sociologist and that of the historian (Giddens, 1982: 16). This thesis on Four Avenues proceeds by using narrative; and as the above discussion shows, the narratives in the following chapters have been developed by way of an analysis of different kinds of evidence relevant to the school and a process of evaluation. However, as Mills (1958) argued in the late 1950s in opposition to a positivistic form of social science, the capacity of a researcher to craft the kind of narratives provided in this thesis comes not only from an analysis of evidence. It also comes from the imagination of a researcher and from the resources for narrative-construction inherent in his or her direct or second-hand experience (Wright, 1992: 113). This includes analogy, the recognition of similar patterns of experience in two different periods, and much more. The kind of story telling-resources sociology provides in relation to Four Avenues is that it provides a tool-kit for enabling one to see the *general* in the *particular*, the individual case in the wider social context and vice-versa (Bauman, 1990: 10). For example, the argument in chapter 5 that a poorly performing New Zealand economy and the implementation of an expensive National Superannuation Scheme by the government had a role in the government's decision to close Four Avenues in 1983 is not the sort of claim that can be derived *directly* from the three kinds of sources discussed above. Developing a claim like this requires the use of a certain degree of imagination, albeit a controlled and disciplined use of it. This claim in chapter 5 is based on the different sources discussed above, but it extrapolates beyond them to

the more general. When it comes to the three turning points in Four Avenues' history, the following four chapters look at these events in relation to the more general history of education in New Zealand from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s.

## ***Conclusion***

This chapter has provided a reflection on the methods used in this study. It has outlined how I gathered coverage from *The Press* on Four Avenues and considered some of the problems with using newspapers as historical sources. Specifically, it has looked at the general bias of *The Press* in relation to Four Avenues and has shown how this has both limitations and advantages in terms of historical research. An advantage, because staff in *The Press* were supportive of and sympathetic towards the school in its 18-year history; a disadvantage, for it sometimes was not very accurate in its accounts and descriptions of what went on there.

This chapter has second discussed the interviewing part of this research and describes how I selected, accessed and involved participants. It has discussed some of the inherent limitations with oral history; nevertheless, this chapter has defended its value because oral history research captures something of the essential phenomenological *connectedness* of a point in time, which is are known by later researcher as discrete events from other sources like documents. This chapter has discussed the ethical issues involved in interviewing for this thesis, especially when it came to talking about the last year of Four Avenues' existence with participants. It has explained how I have handled much of the sensitive information provided by individuals and gives the reasons for why I have decided against using much of it. This chapter has treated the process I went through in developing questions for different interviews and has reflected on how my skills as an interviewer improved as I went along and of what I would do differently.

Thirdly, this chapter has discussed the use of archival materials, correspondence and written documents in this thesis. It has described the four collections I mainly drew upon as historical sources on Four Avenues and considered issues to do with access to these collections and usage of them. It has also discussed how I analysed these collections as historical sources and how they each helped me in addressing the problems I was interested in. In discussing the usage of *The Press*, interviewing and documentary sources, this chapter has shown the overall

rationale in my research was to assess individual pieces of evidence according to as many different sources as I could gather. This required a commitment to constructing arguments from *converging traces* of evidence and of not relying on one source for any one argument.

Lastly, this chapter has discussed the role of narrative and the “sociological imagination” in this thesis. Answering the research question of this thesis—how did Four Avenues survive for 18 years in spite of periodic threats to its existence—has involved more than just describing what happened from different sources. Resources for story-telling inherent in my direct or second-hand experience and imagination have been used in my research to show how the issue of Four Avenues' 18-year survival was inseparable from the broader context of New Zealand educational history from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s. The following two chapters take up Four Avenues' establishment in 1975 in relation to that wider history.

## CHAPTER III

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### *Beginnings*

*I have the utmost respect for the people that got it [Four Avenues] off the ground, particularly Walter and Marion [Logeman]. How they did it? I'll never know. But it was a very timely activity at that particular period in New Zealand's history. And that's what you learn about all social change: that there's got to be a right time and that was the right time.*

*—John Clough, Four Avenues Director 1978-1980 (interview, 28 August 2002).*

### ***Introduction***

The following two chapters discuss the beginnings and establishment of Four Avenues. Using interviews, media sources and the original proposal and prospectus for the school, this chapter provides, first, a narrative of Four Avenues' composition in the six months between the Minister of Education's announcement of the school's establishment and its official opening in May 1975. It looks at Four Avenues in terms of its need for facilities, and looks at the appeal the school held for many teachers and students. Included in this section is an account of what Four Avenues' original philosophy was and of how the school was envisaged as working.

Next, this chapter discusses the social context in which Four Avenues emerged and how that context contributed to the school's establishment. Structuring its discussion around a broad chronological account of the beginnings of the idea of Four Avenues in the Chippenham community, this section discusses how the 1960s counter-culture contributed to the school's emergence, particularly through the influence it had on educational writing in the 1960s and



1970s. This section also discusses how the experiences of Marian and Walter Logeman had a part in the development of the idea of starting Four Avenues. For Marian, her own educational thinking was significant here, as was a trip to the United States in 1970. For Walter, disaffection with formal education and the decision to leave university and become involved in communal living were consequential. Important too were the conversations that members of Chippenham had with many teenagers about their experiences of high schooling. Many of them expressed feelings of dissatisfaction and alienation about their experience of education and wanted an alternative to the conventional state secondary schools.

Third, this chapter discusses how the idea of establishing an alternative secondary schooling programme generated debates over the advantages and disadvantages of having it as part of the state education system. That an alternative school should be a part of the state education system was by no means axiomatic to those formed by the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. This section looks at how egalitarian sentiments among the members of Chippenham community, and the conviction the state ought to provide a variety of approaches to education, had the ascendancy over arguments that Four Avenues should be a private alternative. Important in terms of Chippenham approaching the state about establishing Four Avenues was the influence of Marian Logeman. She was more positive in her attitudes towards the state than others in Chippenham and had a practical sense when it came to working within the context of mainstream state policies and power politics. It was this sense which she was able put to good use in advocating the Chippenham proposal; and it was a crucial component in terms of Four Avenues' establishment in the state education system.

Fourthly, this chapter returns to the issue of the social and political context of Four Avenues' development. It considers what it was about the context of *New Zealand education in the 1970s* that contributed to Four Avenues opening. In this connection, it looks at three features of New Zealand education at the time that were directly consequential. These were: a tradition of progressivism in New Zealand education, a Minister of Education that was favourable to experimentation in state education and a Labour government that had an agenda of implementing significant change in state education. This section briefly discusses what progressivism is, its influence in New Zealand education in the twentieth century and how the recovery of this tradition in the 1970s lent a sense of cogency to the idea of establishing Four Avenues. This chapter also looks at Marion Logeman's interaction with the Minister of Education, and it discusses how the Minister's own biography and interest in progressive, student-centred theories of education was important in Chippenham's cause. Lastly, this

section discusses how Chippenham's idea of a community participation programme corresponded with the three-year term of the Third Labour Government in the 1970s. Labour was supportive to those in communes like Chippenham and through its Education Development Conference it made the issue of educational change and reform a pressing and public issue. Discussing the Education Development Conference, this section argues that it was Labour's commitment to educational reform that contributed to the plausibility of establishing alternative learning programmes in the state education system.

All of these features this chapter concludes contributed to what the quotation from John Clough at the start of page 1 calls the historical *timeliness* of Four Avenues. Yet they did not make the appearance of Four Avenues historically inevitable by any means. Establishing Four Avenues required still the overcoming over many difficulties—for example, the fact that Four Avenues could not exist as an independent programme according to the regulations of the Education Act 1964. The confrontation of these difficulties before the school started is the subject matter of the following chapter.

### ***Establishment of Four Avenues***

On May 26 1975 Phil Amos, the Minister of Education, opened Four Avenues five months and seven days after a media release from his office late in December 1974 announced its establishment. In this relatively short stretch of time, the proposal from the members of the Chippenham Community for a community participation programme, modelled on the Parkway Programme in Philadelphia in the United States, had gone from the point where it had no building or facilities, no staff, enrolled students or prospectus to the point where it would have almost continued support and funding from the state for the next 18 years.

### **Facilities**

Four Avenues required a building from which to base and organise its operations. The first Chippenham proposal claimed the planned community participation programme would not require any dedicated buildings to run successfully; but, after the proposal had undergone numerous amendments and modifications, it was accepted that an office would be a necessity

for administrative and organisational matters. As Walter Logeman, one of the authors of the Chippenham proposal explains:

I envisaged the day-to-day running of the school as being pretty much invisible to the community and to itself almost. It was like a programme. It was called the Community Participation Programme. So that it was sort of a virtual school, using again modern language. I didn't even think it needed an office. Someone thought it needed an office. But I didn't think it needed an office. I was too radical [laughter]. I wasn't radical. I was stupid really! But the idea was that it would just [pause]. It was an organisational phenomenon [pause] like an office was all right. But it would really be an office for a secretary, because any of us could meet in people's homes, factories, offices, libraries, parks [pause] wherever we needed to go. And I did think there would be buildings involved, but I thought that they would somehow organically develop through someone saying, this is great! We've got all these kids who want to do a certain theme and they'd work here and they'd do this and that. It would just sort of organically develop (interview, 20 May 2002).

A dedicated building for Four Avenues was thus seen as essential for *administrative purposes*. The existing facilities of Christchurch city, on the other hand, such as museums, laboratories, shops, factories, hospitals, libraries, sports grounds, and theatres would develop as the *sites of learning* for the school's students. Student learning would not occur in a locatable place or secondary school. Four Avenues would rather be "invisible to the community and to itself ... a virtual school," as Walter Logeman (interview, 20 May 2002) puts it, which would facilitate independent, self-directed student learning right throughout the city of Christchurch.

The day after the Minister of Education announced the establishment of Four Avenues, Graham Robinson, the Department of Education Inspector who would be released from his responsibilities with the Department to become Four Avenues' first Director, claimed the school "urgently required an inner city house which we can use as an office to enable our advisory committee and the school council to begin the formal setting up of the school" (Anonymous, 1974b). By March 1975, the Department of Education had acquired the two-storey house in Gloucester Street that would function as the base of the school's operations until the end of 1983. Up until the beginning of 1975, this building had housed the University of Canterbury Extension Studies Department. It was fortunate for Four Avenues, in this regard, that its process of becoming established in 1975 coincided with the University of

Canterbury's decision to relocate its Extension Studies Department to its (then recently developed) campus in the suburb of Ilam, Christchurch.



**Figure 1: Four Avenues' original building in Gloucester Street, Christchurch. Picture from 1977 *Prospectus*. Sourced from the personal papers of Shirley Croll.**

That Four Avenues sought a central city location was not simply for purposes of convenience, but also because a central city location expressed its substantive values. A central location was important, for as Four Avenues' first prospectus (1975) put it:

The school proposes to use Christchurch and be used by it. The city will become the school. Students will select studies from what Christchurch has to offer, not only in trade skills and professional and academic pursuits, but in art and craft, sport and social welfare. These wide-ranging activities should lead to an informed choice of future occupations. Travelling around the city, finding places for meetings and people willing to teach them gives to the students the awareness of another aspect of life, and responsibility is added to experience (3).

What would constitute learning for students at Four Avenues would be travelling into the centre of the city and interacting with people going about their daily activities and work. Even

the name 'Four Avenues' carried significance: the four avenues being the four belts, named after the superintendents of Canterbury, which bounded early Christchurch—Bealey, Fitzgerald, Moorehouse and Rolleston (Four Avenues, 1975: 2). For these reasons, it was important that Four Avenues have a central city location.

## **Staff**

It was envisaged by the authors of the community participation programme proposal that Four Avenues would only need part-time tutors and coordinators and full-time secretaries (Chippenham Community, No Date: 5). Tutors would be paid from a special fund and incorporated into the programme on the basis of student demand and interest while coordinators would be employed to regularly lead student home groups and/or tutor on a part-time basis. Full-time secretaries would be needed for administration and to monitor the whereabouts of students (Chippenham Community, No Date: 6). Nevertheless, by the time the Department of Education became involved in planning, it was agreed Four Avenues would need at least four full-time staff members to operate its programs effectively (Anonymous, 1975a: 16).

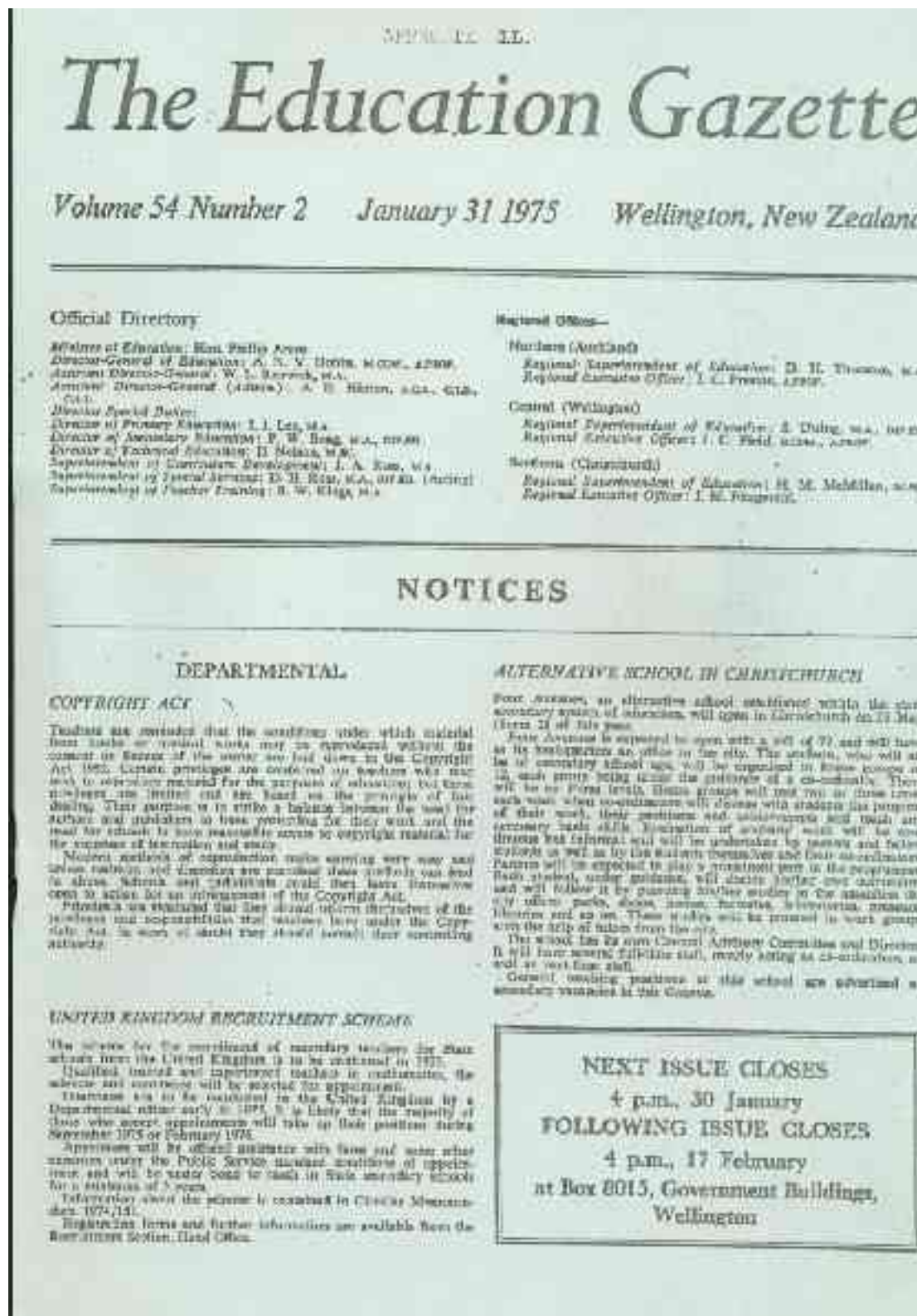


Figure 2: Original *Education Gazette* advertisement for staff at Four Avenues. Sourced from Mellon (1978c).

In February 1975, Four Avenues advertised for staff in the *Education Gazette* (see Figure 2). Four Avenues received an overwhelming response. One hundred and twenty seven people applied for five full-time positions (Anonymous, 1975b: 10). What the school particularly

looked for in candidates was an understanding of its educational philosophy and an ability to stimulate and work together with student interest within the context of a traditional teaching environment. During their interviews, candidates were asked the following seven questions to gauge their suitability for working at Four Avenues:

1. Do you see any dangers in alternative schooling?
2. Would you tell us about those things you have enjoyed while teaching in traditional schools?
3. This school sets out to meet student needs. What do you consider the greatest needs of adolescents?
4. What features would you like to see in a program that might meet these needs?
5. Interests that might be useful options?
6. What sort of things would a student have to do before you would consider expulsion?<sup>16</sup>

One of the reasons for raising these questions with applicants was to identify those who were applying for positions at Four Avenues just because they could not cope with the teaching demands of a mainstream secondary school. The structured environment and curriculum provided by a mainstream secondary school often meant that less accomplished teachers were able to cope with the demands of teaching along with their more capable colleagues. Yet in the educational setting of Four Avenues, which would lack the traditional structure and discipline provided by normal schooling, it was feared teacher incompetence and deficiency would only be highlighted and exposed. As Marion Hobbs puts it:

We had someone like Graham Robinson who understood that if you're going to give kids a lot of freedom you've got to be really prepared as a teacher. You can't be sloppy; you can only have really top-line teachers in there (interview, 21 August 2002).

Some of the staff selected from the Four Avenues interviewing process were educators with a background teaching in established state secondary schools in New Zealand and overseas. Individuals from ordinary schools generally were attracted to Four Avenues because they “wanted something different” or were dissatisfied with the setting that they were in (Walter Logeman, interview, 20 May 2002). In terms of helping less experienced teachers adjust to the

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<sup>16</sup>For this list of interview questions, I am indebted to the personal papers of Shirley Croll.

demands of teaching adolescents, especially within the unstructured environment of Four Avenues, the presence of more experienced staff proved invaluable. For example, that many students understanding of Four Avenues' philosophy was a "you're allowed to smoke, you're allowed to swear, you're allowed to do anything you like attitude" came as something of a surprise to inexperienced staff (Walter Logeman, interview, 20 May 2002). Walter Logeman speaks of how there "couldn't have been a more different image in their [the students'] heads to my head of what the school might be like in day-to-day running" (interview, 20 May 2002). To the more experienced staff, however, this was less of a surprise:

Well, I think it was more of a shock to me probably than to anybody else, because they didn't have the idealised version in their head as much as what I did. No matter what was on paper [pause] like we had some very good teachers at that time. I think that the original six teachers were Graham, Mattie, and Cynthia (maybe she was a bit later, she used to work at [Christchurch] Girls High) [pause] there was another guy called Jock [pause] he was a lovely old man [pause] probably not that old [laughter] but he was a very experienced teacher [pause] a science teacher. They knew what kids were like. They knew [pause] they wanted something different themselves and they had pictures of it, but the reality wasn't such a shock to them. They pretty much saw what they already knew. See I'd never taught secondary school kids. I was a teacher there as well. I was trained as a primary school teacher but I had really had my head in the clouds in that whole proposal (interview, 20 May 2002).

## **Students**

Four Avenues called for enrolments from potential students. The community participation programme (Chippenham Community, No Date) document stated Four Avenues would be full time for students aged 11 to 18 from all social backgrounds and ranges of ability (1). A diversity of ages and backgrounds was viewed as an essential stimulus for valuable learning. It was important Four Avenues was not particularly for students who were posing challenges and difficulties for other state high schools.

Four Avenues' opening roll would consist of approximately 72 pupils (Anonymous, 1974a: 3). Each student would be placed in a home group that would consist of 12 pupils or less under



the care of a coordinator (Chippenham Community, No Date: 4). Home groups would meet regularly at least once a week to arrange learning, evaluate individual progress and discuss problems (Anonymous, 1974a: 3). Students within each home group were expected to assist fellow group members in this process, encouraging a stronger sense of responsibility and concern for others (Chippenham Community, No Date: 4). Having a mixture of ages would facilitate the development of group cooperation, for it was hoped older students would demonstrate to the younger members of the group how this was done by example (Chippenham Community, No Date: 4).<sup>17</sup>

Home groups would provide students with a place for security and help or as the Chippenham Committee (No Date) document expressed it, the basic level of individual interaction (1). Teaching in the basic skills of English, mathematics and science would be provided for students in groups as needed. However, the pedagogical emphasis at Four Avenues would be on getting students to learn from first hand experience, from other students and from people with special skills (Chippenham Committee, No Date: 3):

Our social and physical environment is a network of learning resources and sale yards, factories, shops, libraries, rivers, weather, insects ... and within this environment there are people who have skills they can impart to students simply by demonstration (Chippenham Committee, No Date: 5).

Teenagers would be required, in this respect, to define their own programme of study and find the resources and the people that would help them to learn. Although it was recognised this would be a time consuming activity for most students, it was still seen as educational and thus valuable. Part of the process of personal learning would be the formation of work groups by students for a particular purpose. These would generally be distinctive from home groups and created because of common interest. For example, they could be a group of students meeting regularly to discuss films or meeting because they were interested in aspects of the building trade. To encourage links with the wider community, work groups at Four Avenues could also involve people not formally enrolled in its programme—for example, parents. If students required or requested it, people skilled in a particular area (maybe from outside the Four Avenues community) would be employed by the school to lead these groups.

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<sup>17</sup>Compare Walter Logeman on this point: “One of the principles was that it would be cross-generational [pause] this was part of the philosophy of having that open source education. You needed older kids to be in the same group as younger kids, so older kids can teach younger kids how it works” (interview, 20 May 2002).

At the beginning of March 1975, Four Avenues called for enrolments from interested students. Interest was so great that within three weeks the demand for places exceeded the school's capacity. By the beginning of April, the school had received 145 applications for its available 72 places. The school considered a number of methods of selecting students. It finally decided on a balloting system. This system was based on the public lottery system the Parkway Programme had used when 4000 applications were received for 120 available places in its first year (Vaughan, 2001: 36). Age, gender, and geographical location were all well represented in the 145 applications and the applicants represented a cross-section of different high-schooling zones within Christchurch. However, the balloting procedure was not without problems. Among the original 145 applications, a preponderance of 14 year-old girls was found.

The balloting procedure halved the number of younger female adolescent applications; yet even after this, they were still the most predominant age group out of the candidates left. Eight further ballots proportionally reduced the number of male and female applicants by age group. Boys and girls were balloted separately in the process and 16 to 18 year-olds were treated as a single age group. Drawing individual pupils was done using coloured marbles. This method was used to ensure the anonymity of prospective students and guarantee that bias could in no way influence the selection of candidates. In each ballot, pupils were numbered and coded with different marbles. The marbles remaining after the required number of 72 pupils were drawn were matched with pupils names and these pupils were declined entry to Four Avenues or placed on a waiting list if they (or their parents) so desired. Four Avenues had to continue to using balloting and a waiting list into the early 1980s because it continued to receive more enrolments than it could accept.

Four Avenues was not intended for problem students. However, among the original applicants, many students were found to have psychological and behavioural problems and were more or less the opposite of the ideal learner envisaged in the Chippenham proposal.<sup>18</sup> As chapter 5 shows, the fact many students of this sort came to Four Avenues in the early years of its operation caused staff at Four Avenues to re-evaluate its original philosophy in a number of key areas in the late 1970s. Having discussed the opening of Four Avenues, the rest of this look chapter looks at the beginnings of the idea for starting Four Avenues in the early 1970s.

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<sup>18</sup>Graham Robinson quoted in *Christchurch Star*, 12 February 1976, page number unavailable. Sourced from Archives New Zealand, Christchurch Office, Reference Number: CH 690.

## *Developing the idea of Four Avenues*

### **The Counter-culture and Chippenham**

The beginnings of the idea of Four Avenues are inseparable from the decision of Marian and Walter Logeman to establish, along with others, a communal living experiment in Christchurch called Chippenham in the early 1970s. Out of the context of communal living came the idea for establishing a community participation programme in Christchurch—which was the generic term for what eventually became Four Avenues. Communal living experiments such as Chippenham were popular in New Zealand in the 1970s. More generally, they reflected what is imprecisely called the counter-culture of the late 1960s. Since the work of Reich (1970), the word ‘counter-culture’ has passed into common usage and become a generic term for the unprecedented happenings and the social upheavals in the 1960s (Wright, 1989: 12). These included everything from rock and roll and folk music to hippies, peace activism, anti-Vietnam war protests, demands for women's rights, a liberalising of sexual attitudes and the increased use of drugs like marijuana. The counter-culture was an international phenomenon and its influence was especially felt in New Zealand in the 1970s. It created, and reflected, an environment that was favourable to the establishment of communes and the development of innovative ideas in education. It celebrated iconoclasm, permissiveness and fun for its own sake: doing your own thing.

In connection with the term ‘counter-culture’, a distinction can be made (although there are connections) between the radical counter-culture, on the one hand, and the consumption boom dubbed by many historians as the “swinging sixties” on the other. As Western nations such as New Zealand emerged from the austerity of the post-war years, high productivity and full employment made not only possible, but also desirable a new ethic of consumption. This created a sharp increase in the spending power of many young people (seen especially in the expansion of the recording industry and the clothing trade) and made “youth” a more pronounced and self-conscious life-stage in comparison with the past (Wright, 1989: 12). What characterised the radical counter-culture was that it was all run on a shoestring amidst a time of increasing affluence (Wright, 1989: 12). In terms of the above typology of the counter-culture, Chippenham can be viewed as a New Zealand expression of the radical counter-culture.

Among the streams which combined to form the counter-culture (in both senses) four can be singled out that are particularly relevant to education. The first is expressionism which entered educational thinking through the writings of Paul Goodman and through the teaching of art, drama and English (Wright, 1989: 12). The second was a radical individualism, which in Raphael Samuel's (1985) words "made personal identity and individual self-assertion the highest good." Popularisers of the ideas of Freud, like Fromm (1942), argued that far from enhancing freedom, conventional middle-class societies were repressive and psychologically harmful. Popular works of anthropology, like Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* (1959), suggested that social structures, like those of modern Western societies were relative, and that we might choose to live differently, with fewer inhibitions. Rousseau's idea that the individual is born free and placed under chains by society, began to enjoy new popularity.

Through the work of A. S. Neill (1968) in Great Britain and John Holt (1969) and Herbert Kohl (1969) in the United States, this idea gained enormous currency in the field of education in the 1960s and 1970s. In many classrooms, teacher-centred methods were discouraged in favour of progressive child-centred approaches. Rote learning was gradually displaced by curricula which encouraged free expression on the part of the child.

An interest in mysticism and other non-rational modes of experience third shaped the counter-culture. Among many educationalists this found virulent expression in the rejection of Skinnerian behaviourism and the belief that children should be conditioned by a series of inducements and rewards in the classroom. It was also expressed by many teachers in the rejection of non-coercive means of teaching children and a rejection of corporeal punishment. Under the influence of authors like Rogers (1969) and Postman and Weingartner (1969), emphasis was placed on non-directive learning and the individuality and creativity of each child. A new ethos of expressive individualism came to influence the thinking of many educators in the 1960s and 1970s, in which the key to effective learning lay not in the internalisation of social norms, but rather in freedom from them. The concept of socialisation, which dominated thinking in New Zealand educational social policy until the late 1970s, increasingly came to be viewed not as the main aim of schooling but as the original sin of society against the individual child. Authors like A. S. Neill (1968) made it synonymous with indoctrination—an emotive equation, especially in the light of twentieth century experiences of totalitarianisms of both the left and right.

Along with the emphasis on the non-rational and the mystical, there was fourthly, and

somewhat paradoxically, renewed stress in the counter-culture on Enlightenment concepts of universal reason—which distinguishes it from some forms of post-modernism (for example, Lyotard, 1984). In education, such a stress reflected the continuing influence of earlier twentieth century thinkers like John Dewey. Nevertheless, in the 1960s concepts of universal reason were given renewed prominence, especially in the writings of Paul Goodman, A. S. Neill (1968) and Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner (1969). Four Avenues itself drew upon discourses of universal reason in the 1970s. In one early document, for example, it called itself “a moral institution, emphasising personal responsibility and reason” (Mellon, 1978c).

The counter-culture, nevertheless, only won the devotion of only a minority of the generation most affected by it—roughly the cohort born between 1945 and 1965. Walter and Marian Logeman were far from wholehearted aficionados of the counter-culture, although each recognises they were profoundly by it. Walter Logeman says, in this respect:

I can't really separate the school out from the counter-culture and communal living. But there were a lot of good [pause] I mean the whole ethos was do your own thing! This wasn't really what I was on about. But it was still people doing their own thing did resonate with me quiet a lot. That was the slogan in the late 1960s. Hippies, what are hippies? People who do their own thing. Well, it was pretty good. It was better than doing their [emphasis] thing. But we were very realistic (interview, 20 May 2002).

Educating children and young people was simply more *serious* than the counter-culture tended to be. The task of teaching and looking after young people inevitably imposed a discipline on the behaviour of adults the counter-culture was not generally willing to countenance. Saying this though, it is hard not to overemphasise the impulse that the counter-culture lent to the establishment of educational programmes like Four Avenues the world over. An American influence was especially important here. This influence ranges from books such as the popular Penguin Education Specials, which were nearly all cheap British editions of the work of American progressive educators, to changing social customs, such as the increasing use of first names rather than surnames. The influence, of course, was not one way. American educators such as John Holt and Herbert Kohl worked with a somewhat idealised picture of A. S. Neill's Summerhill School in England and Carl Rogers (1969) was inspired by the work of Sylvia Ashton-Warner (1964) in New Zealand. The American influence, however, was pervasive, providing such archetypal phenomenon as student rebellion and

alienation, alternative lifestyles and free schools (Swidler, 1979).

### **Biographies of Marian and Walter Logeman**

Along with the establishment of Chippenham, the development of the concept of Four Avenues was linked to the experiences of Marian and Walter Logeman in the early 1970s. This section discusses their biographies in relation to the idea of establishing Four Avenues, beginning with Marian.

In 1970, Marian Logeman spent two and half months in the United States on a student leadership grant that was part of the Fulbright Scheme. While in the United States, she had the opportunity to look at a number of educational initiatives and become familiar with the Parkway Program in Philadelphia. Walter says that Marian returned from her trip with a suitcase full of material excited by the possibility of establishing a programme like Parkway in Christchurch. Founded by John Bremer, Parkway was known internationally as “the school without walls” (Bremer and Moschizer, 1971). Although Parkway had a base for administration and a weekly school meeting, it operated as school without dedicated classrooms or buildings. Its classes were held all over Philadelphia, the use of which was negotiated according to demand. Parkway gained international fame in the early 1970s among educators for its successes among young people who were disadvantaged and dropping out of conventional high schools. Christchurch, Marian believed, possessed the kind of infrastructure that would make the establishment of a similar “school without walls” workable within it. It had a good public transport system that enabled those without a car to quickly travel into the central business district from all over the city. In addition, it also had an art gallery, a museum, a public library and a university campus and a public hospital that were all within walking distance of each other and contiguous to the central business district.

While at university and teachers college, Marian was influenced by the work of Brazilian educator Paolo Freire (1970). In his major work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he questioned the belief that increasing expenditure on conventional state education for poor children was beneficial for them. Despite billions of dollars spent in the United States on helping poorer children to attain the educational levels of their middle class peers, little to nothing had changed. He also argued the conventional classroom with its power differences between

students and teachers was little more than banking education and therefore dehumanising to students. Banking education needed to be replaced by systems of dialogue and problem-posing education that recognised students' innate humanity and the importance of their questions and what they saw as relevant. The ability of this sort of education to empower students, Freire claimed, was enormous. Parkway perhaps appealed to Marian in this connection because it was a programme that was having success with many Philadelphian youth who were failing or dropping out of high school. Moreover, with John Bremer's insistence that the best learning was not coerced but based on student motivation and done in the context of achieving real-life goals, Parkway was a tangible embodiment of some of Freire's prescriptive proposals (Vaughan, 2001: 35). Therefore, along with her reading of Paolo Freire and involvement in Chippenham, Marian's initial interest in establishing a community participation programme in Christchurch was formed by her experience of seeing alternative schools in action.

Walter's interest in the idea of establishing Four Avenues was intertwined with that of Marian and the starting of Chippenham. Nevertheless, he traces in his interview a personal trajectory in terms of a developing interest in the idea of alternative education. This trajectory was related to his negative experiences of compulsory schooling as a child and teenager and the disillusionment he experienced at university later while studying. Raised in Sydney Australia, Walter hated the schools he attended as a child and teenager. Most of his learning, he says, was done in the home by reading newspapers and magazines:

We used to get Sunday papers and all that, but I discovered the *Readers Digest*. It was a fascist little magazine, but it was better than the Sunday papers. I could read about the world and it was quite interesting. And this was sort of me doing my own thing (interview, 20 May 2002).

When he was older, he "discovered the library and followed a whole thread of reading after he left high school and travelled" (interview, 20 May 2002) His reading as a young adult included, "the existentialists, philosophers like Bertrand Russell and educationalists like Paul Goodman and John Holt" (interview, 20 May 2002). Later on, Ivan Illich was particularly significant for Walter, although he says he "didn't read that much of it all, because it was quite hard to read that stuff" (interview, 20 May 2002). Illich's most famous work was *Deschooling Society* (1973). In that book, he claimed that compulsory education was at the root of many of the problems of modernity. The education system, he argued, socialised people into becoming

dependent on the knowledge and judgement of experts like social workers, teachers, academics, police, and health professionals. This diminished individual agency and lessened the sense of responsibility that communities could feel for the world in which they lived. “Medical treatment is mistaken for health care,” Illich (1973) claimed, “social work for the improvement of community life, police protection for safety, military poise for national security, the rat race for productive work” (1). Thus, extending his analysis beyond school, he argued, “everywhere not only education but society as a whole needs deschooling” (10).

Along with this kind of reading, Walter's interest in the idea of an alternative learning programme was also shaped by disillusionment with the study he was undertaking at university. After leaving school, he was encouraged by friends to enrol in university. He was reluctant to take their advice at first, because he thought it would be as dreadful an experience as his primary and secondary schooling. He completed his Bachelor of Arts at the University of Canterbury in 1967 and was a capable enough student to enrol in a Master of Arts in Education programme. While studying, however, he struggled with the feeling that he was being forced to “give up on his own explorations and told top down what to read, what to do, what to write [and] how to write it” (interview, 20 May 2002). As he explains:

... I was just churning out stuff to get the marks in the end. Actually, the more I gave up on my own thinking, the better my marks were. I was starting to say this in tutorials and I did a paper in education. I was starting to say it in education, and so the very critique of I was making of education system I was bringing back there. It was like being in the Catholic Church but having lost the faith. I had to get out of there (interview, 20 May 2002).

Walter was at university and on the way to getting a Master of Arts. While he was studying, however, and getting a qualification that would provide him with a “meal ticket,” he sensed he was doing little thinking of his own and learning little that was of relevance to him, even though he was getting a certified education. He approached an academic supervisor about this problem, but seemed to receive little comprehension. “The foolishness in terms of a meal-ticket,” Walter says, “was all that he could say back to me. Just do it and you'll earn more money” (interview, 20 May 2002). The fact this response came from “a professor of education” only increased his feelings of disillusionment and frustration. Shortly afterwards, he pulled out of his Master of Arts degree, left the University of Canterbury and was involved in the establishment of Chippenham.



## **Interest from Teenagers**

The development of the idea of establishing Four Avenues was furthermore linked to the conversations that members of Chippenham had with high school students who were dissatisfied with their secondary school education and wanted something different. As Marian says:

I think [pause] I can't remember [pause] between 1970-72, I can't remember the date. Young students, young kids came to us who were interestingly from Avonside Girls High (where I was later Principal) and from Shirley Boys High asking [pause] they used to each come out and visit us and sort of talk about their schools, what was wrong with their school, what kind of school they dreamed of. And that set us off thinking about it (interview, 21 August 2002).

Marian Logeman also went around many Christchurch high schools during the lunch hour and talked to students about the idea of Four Avenues (Mellon, 1978b). The idea of small intimate classes in a small school appealed to most of them. They liked the prospect of having classes as small as 12 people, having school in a large house, having no uniform and being allowed to let their hair grow. One student who was part of the initial intake of students at Four Avenues claimed the school appealed to him because unlike his other schools “education was [not] secondary to discipline” (Mellon, 1978b). “People,” he claimed, “were forever at you about hair, socks and ties which had nothing to do with the learning process” (Mellon, 1978c). Others spoke of alienation in the relationships they had with other significant adults both at home and at school (Mellon, 1978b). Their teachers, they felt, were not genuine and acted in front of the class in “phoney ways” (Mellon, 1978b). For example, when the subject was chemistry, a student talked of how one teacher in his school “affected knowledge of classical Greek in front of the class or when it was mathematics, how the teacher would talk atheism in a superficial pseudo-intellectual manner all the time instead of teaching” (Mellon, 1978b). Many were also interested in Four Avenues because they believed their teachers “had no clues to life and no existence outside the classroom” (Mellon, 1978b). Teachers, they felt, “pumped information in at an unreal level while trying to cope with the real things going on in an unreal way” (Mellon, 1978b).

Younger teenagers expressed interest in Four Avenues because of the individual attention it promised to offer. Some, like the secretary at Four Avenues from 1975-76, found the process

of adapting from small primary schools, where much individual care and attention was provided, to the more large and impersonal urban high schools difficult (Mellon, 1978c). Many became truant and/or lost interest in their work because they felt that nobody in their high school really cared (Mellon, 1978c). Moreover, some students were confused over how what they were learning in school was going to be relevant to life outside of it. As the Four Avenues secretary put it, "You were not prepared for life sufficiently outside of the educational institutions and too often students are thrown out into the community with no idea of what occupation they wish to pursue or capable of making the decisions they are faced with" (Mellon, 1978c). Some young people also experienced little motivation in their high schools and believed that a more intimate environment that took their interests as primary would help to give their work direction and purpose (Mellon, 1978c).

It was complaints like these from Christchurch young people about their existing schools that shaped and gave stimulus to Chippenham's idea of establishing Four Avenues. What all of these complaints point to is the *alienation* many of these young people felt from the experience and knowledge offered in their schools. Educational literature from the early 1970s, like Postman and Weingartner (1969) and Dennison (1972), shows that these young people's feelings of disaffection with school were not only confined to them, but were part of a much wider international phenomenon in the early 1970s. Dennison's (1972) description of José, a young person in the United States, perhaps could serve as a portrayal of a number of young people Marian and Walter Logeman talked to:

José could not believe that anything contained in books, or mentioned in classrooms, belonged by rights to himself, or even belonged to the world at large, as trees and lampposts belong quite simply to the world we live in. He believed, on the contrary, that things that dealt with school belonged somehow to school, or were administered by some far-reaching bureaucratic arm. There had been no indication that he could share in them, but rather than he would be measured against them and found wanting (67).

The problem many of these young people experienced was that the high schools they were a part of seemed like they were indifferent to, or even against, their personhood and will. To paraphrase the well-known dictum of Jean Piaget,<sup>19</sup> these young people felt that they were not the agents of their own learning. John Clough believes what attracted many young people

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<sup>19</sup>Which goes: "The child must be the agent of his own learning."

about the idea of Four Avenues was not so much the prospect of a school without walls, but the contemplation of escaping from “the heavy regulatory regime” of other high schools. As he puts it:

What the kids were really kicking against was they saw as the heavy regulatory regime of most of the other high schools of the time. If I have any major arguments with the publicity of the day, it was that those kids were often described as drop-outs. But to me that is quite wrong. The young people at Four Avenues were not drop-outs; they wanted to be at school. They just didn't want to be at the school they had been at [laughter]. They all wanted to make a go of it in some way or another; some would take longer than others and some had to get it out of their systems which meant that they had to be in a safe, secure place. But they certainly weren't dropping out of the system (interview, 28 August 2002).

### **State Programme or Private Alternative**

The beginnings of the idea of establishing Four Avenues, therefore, were a combination of the establishment of Chippenham in the early 1970s, the influence of the counter-culture of the 1960s, the life-histories and thinking of Marian and Walter Logeman and the want of many young people for an alternative to the high schools they were attending. Once the idea of establishing Four Avenues was put forward, discussion developed in Chippenham around the issue of whether Four Avenues should be a state-run programme or private alternative. That such an argument occurred in this context was perhaps indicative of larger debates in the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s over the relationship they should have towards the state (Gamson, 1996). Was it best to work within existing government policies and political power configurations to effect desired outcomes; or was it preferable to renounce this kind of relationship and concentrate on quality-of-life and collective identity issues? *In The Spirit of the Sixties*, historian James Farrell (1997) writing of the American social movements of the 1960s, observes the first option of working within the existing political power arrangements was a strategy generally favoured and followed by many of the social movements of the 1960s—much of the Black civil rights movement being a prominent example. However, by the early 1970s, the second attitude towards political power could be discerned in many movements. This was conditioned by such things as increasing pessimism over the Earth's

ecological capacity, worsening economic conditions internationally, and concern over the environmental and human impact of unlimited technological and economic growth (Schumacher, 1974; Goudzwaard, 1978). A widespread longing for a simple and more natural way of life developed, along with a trenchant criticism of bureaucracy and modernity. Attention in many movements shifted away from influencing government and political power configurations to quality-of-life and identity issues. In Farrell's terms, it represented a shift from *reformist* to *personalist* politics. Rather than trying to effect social change, attention shifted to gaining space and recognition for different groups and identities in the public sphere.

Discussions in Chippenham and among alternative lifestylers more generally over whether Four Avenues should be a public or private alternative suggest tensions between these two strategies were part of the idea of the community participation programme from very early on. To put the issue in a series of questions: was it going to be a part of the existing institutional arrangements of New Zealand education, seeking to effect systemic transformation of them from within? Or was it going to be focused around establishing a private school largely detached from and indifferent to developments in the wider public schooling system? Furthermore, who was going to have ownership of the community participation programme? The state or the alternative lifestyle community? These were the questions raised about Four Avenues, both within Chippenham and within wider alternative lifestyle/communal living circles in Christchurch.

Having Four Avenues as a state funded programme potentially meant that the kind of learning envisaged within it would be available to *all* adolescents, regardless of socio-economic background. Putting Four Avenues, however, under the direct tutelage of the state would involve operating within the institutional and regulatory constraints of the education system and compromising the substantive values that it would embody. Having Four Avenues as a private alternative, on the other hand, would potentially give those involved in running it more freedom in embodying certain pedagogical ideals. Yet the kind of education Four Avenues offered would only be available to the children of parents who could afford it. There was the prospect also that as a private alternative it would be tangential in the education system. From this position, Four Avenues probably would have no leverage to affect wider structural change in education.

To Walter Logeman, the prospect of making Four Avenues a state school “was as appealing

as putting lipstick on a pig” (interview, 20 May 2002). Yet the thought Four Avenues would only exist as something private was even more objectionable to him. Developing Four Avenues along these lines would exclude many students who would benefit from it because of their financial circumstances. To him, there was something more ambitious about the concept of Four Avenues than just establishing something for a relatively small circle of like-minded people who could afford it:

We aimed at it not being an alternative school and I can remember the discussions we had: we were not an alternative school but a new model, a new way of doing it and the idea was that it would transform everything. That was the idea; we were grand in our thinking. Well, I was. But I didn't like to think of it as, OK there are some kids who can go to our school and the other kids who go somewhere else (interview, 20 May 2002).

Marian Logeman likewise found the prospect of Four Avenues as a private alternative just as unappealing. Influenced by the Brazilian educator Paolo Freire (1970), she believed that what Freire called dialogue and problem-posing education could succeed in the state education system and bring about change, especially for groups and individuals that perennially failed in mainstream schools. When it came to the issue of whether Four Avenues was going to be a public programme or a private alternative, she was adamant that it was not going to be private:

We looked like the Green movement today you can see there were the shades of those people who were well off, very well off and the Tamariki school movement who wanted a private school, a private alternative school on a Summerhill model.<sup>20</sup> And then at the same time, you had Walter [Logeman] and myself pretty much affected by Paolo Freire and education as a thing for social change, so we weren't going to go down the private school model (21 August 2002).

## **Working with the State**

Marian Logeman's perspective about the efficacy of government policies and political power

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<sup>20</sup>Tamariki School is a private alternative primary school in Christchurch that was established in 1967. For more information, see the schools URL: <<http://tamariki.school.nz>>.

configurations was generally more positive than Walter Logeman's. Walter often equated educational institutions with penal institutions in conversation,<sup>21</sup> implying they were virtually irredeemable as organisations. Yet Marian saw the concept of Four Avenues in terms of "improving" the existing educational system, believing that it was not beyond the pale of transformation. As the discussion of the Educational Conference below shows, this more moderate language of improvement significantly coincided with the language of the Third Labour Government when it came to educational change. According to Walter, it was Marian's ability to frame Four Avenues in this language, her more positive attitude to political power arrangements and her ability to operate within them that was a key part of Four Avenues' establishment as a state-run programme in May 1975:

I'd talk about schools as penal institutions and Marian talked about making them better and so on. And I'd think, Ahhh, that's like putting lipstick on a pig. It can't be done! But she could do it. Obviously, here she is in the Labour Party right now.<sup>22</sup> She's much more pragmatic. And that really was a good combination. I had some ideas that appealed to a whole strata of people that wouldn't get caught up in making submissions to government. In fact, it was quite a strange idea to have a hippie sort of idea making an approach to government. Like that was probably the difference between Marian and me in a way. Out of that synthesis came the idea of setting Four Avenues up as a state school (interview, 20 May 2002).

Talk of a "combination" or "synthesis" between Walter's ideas and Marian's political pragmatism was a shared theme in the interviews with Walter Logeman and Marian Hobbs. As Marian puts it: "I have to say we had a lovely good combination [pause] the Department, Minister, and Walter with his ideas and me with my hard-nosed, how you get it to go attitude" (14 August 2002). In Bourdieu's (1998b) terms, Marian had a "practical sense" when it came to politics; that is, an ability to comprehend and negotiate the political field, which she used effectively in urging the Chippenham proposal on the government and the Department of Education. Before getting involved in Chippenham, she had been a well known student politician and activist and had received a Student Leadership Grant through the Fulbright Scheme, which had enabled her to travel to the United States in 1970. She was also involved

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<sup>21</sup>This equation, Walter says, is based on an aphorism made famous by the Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find in McLuhan's *corpus* where this comes from.

<sup>22</sup>At the time of writing, Marian Hobbs is a Cabinet Minister in the New Zealand Labour Party and Member of Parliament for the Wellington Central electorate.

in one of the Third Labour Government's Education Development Conference committees from 1972 to 1974.

### ***Educational Context***

Much of the success, therefore, of Chippenham in establishing Four Avenues in the state education system was because of Marian's "practical sense" when it came to working within the context of existing government policies. Yet as Marian's language of "a lovely combination" indicates, she was only part of the reason for the establishment of Four Avenues. Just as important as this "practical sense" on Marian's part were the discourses embedded in the idea of a community participation programme. The rest of this section discusses how the idea of establishing a state-run "school without walls" in Christchurch had plausibility in the context of education in New Zealand in the 1970s. It looks at what it was about the context of New Zealand education at the time that made the establishment of Four Avenues a viable proposition

The counter-culture discussed above was an important part of this environment, inasmuch as it fostered a climate of iconoclasm in fields like education and a willingness to consider and experiment with new ideas. The efforts of the Chippenham community undoubtedly benefited from the overall conditions created by the counter-culture. Yet more directly consequential in terms of establishing Four Avenues was the dominance of progressivism in New Zealand education in the 1970s and the presence of a Labour government and Minister of Education willing to experiment with progressive, child-centred theories in the schooling system.

### **Progressivism in New Zealand Education**

Ironically, the students' expression of dissatisfaction above over the division between the "real world" and their experience of high schooling coincides with progressivist ideology (Carpenter, 2001: 123). More accurately, rather being an ideology, progressivism encompasses a wide-range of ideologies, including child-centred learning, self-expression, creative learning and cooperative learning. Philosophic approaches such as the Playcentre Way and alternative learning systems such as those described by Neill (1968), Illich (1973),

Steiner (1923; 1948), Ashton-Warner (1964) and Richardson (1964) can all be seen as progressive; and through the reports of the Education Development Conference progressivism came to define the parameters of debate in New Zealand education in the 1970s.

The American philosopher John Dewey is commonly viewed as the most influential exponent of the progressive paradigm in modern times. His views are taken as representative here, because they have influenced both alternative and mainstream educators. Like the Chippenham proposal, Dewey argued the human contacts of everyday life provide unlimited, natural and dynamic learning situation for people. Education for him is the process of life-adjustment to an ever-changing environment. It is a continuous, complex, rational, interactive and objective process, with the future implicated in present learning activity. Moreover, in common with the Chippenham proposal, Dewey maintained learning and education should arise out of perceived needs of students. The educative process is an evolving one, where teacher and student determine learning cooperatively (Archambault, 1966). The prime role of the teacher is to interpret the needs and interest of the child and guide them. All classwork is investigative rather than prescriptive. All educational goals, or outcomes (to use more modern terminology), are tentative and subject to change, depending on the desires and situation of the student. Like the Chippenham proposal also,<sup>23</sup> parents and the wider community should have an active involvement in the educative process. In brief, Dewey argued a sense of social and communal reality should be constructed and reflected in the school.

As the discussion of philosophy of Four Avenues indicates in the first section of this chapter, Four Avenues embodied and freely framed its philosophy of education in progressive terms. In terms of the history of New Zealand education in the twentieth century, the following discussion shows how this was a timely strategy.

Aspects of progressivism impacted on New Zealand education as early as the 1920s through the work of teachers influenced by the Montessori method (Montessori, 1919), but it was in the 1970s that progressivism was to have a major though limited influence in the New Zealand education system, coinciding with the visits of educators such as Paolo Freire and Ivan Illich to New Zealand in 1974 and 1978 (Roberts, 1999).

As far back as the 1940s, progressivism exercised a direct influence on the primary and secondary schooling curriculum in New Zealand through the appointment of Clarence Beeby

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<sup>23</sup>Compare the Picot report (Department of Education, 1988).



as Director General of Education in 1940. Beeby's overt progressivism was of concern to many, and McGeorge (1992) describes the fears many felt when the First Labour Government overhauled both the primary and secondary curricula during Beeby's tenure:

A new, more child-centred curriculum for primary schools brought dark mutterings about Beebyism and the playway with public concern that discipline and industry would fly out the window with intellectual rigour (McGeorge, 1992: 50).

Ideas of curriculum development as proposed by thinkers like John Dewey underpinned the First Labour Government's reforms of the primary and secondary school curricula and the progressivist outlook more generally. Dewey's ideas provided teachers with considerable autonomy to ascertain needs, and to plan and teach accordingly. Hence, when the Chippenham commune appeared in the early 1970s with its proposal of a state-run community participation programme, it did this in the context of an education system that for the previous three decades had incorporated progressive ideas into its programmes and was relatively well-known for experimenting with them.

The work of Carl Rogers (1969) shows the international esteem that New Zealand had in this respect. When discussing his non-directive approach to teaching and classroom interaction, Rogers frequently referred to the alternative learning programme of New Zealander Sylvia Ashton-Warner (1964) with disadvantaged Maori as an exemplar of what he was proposing. As pointed out before, the extent of progressive influence on the New Zealand education system should not be exaggerated; it was real but circumscribed. By the time Four Avenues opened in 1975, experimental programmes in the private sector like Tamariki (opened in Christchurch in 1968), Rosedale School (opened in Auckland in 1969) and Auckland Alternative Secondary School (opened in Auckland in 1973) had all been permitted to operate by the Department of Education. Chippenham, therefore, not only found an education system that was generally well-disposed to progressive ideas in the 1970s, it also found established alternative schools right across New Zealand that were practising many of its ideas. In such an atmosphere, it was perhaps inevitable, given the right time and political circumstances, that a similar programme would be established in the state sector.

## **The Minister of Education**

The election of the Third Labour Government in 1972 and its Minister of Education, Phil Amos, provided Chippenham with the opportunity to press for the establishment of an alternative secondary schooling programme in the state system. Representing Chippenham, Marian approached the Minister and received an enthusiastic response. As she puts it:

It was brilliant. Absolutely supportive. Absolutely. We wouldn't have had a hope in hell any other way. To break out and do something really different requires somebody who's got a little bit of guts to try something different and he did have (interview, 21 August 2002).

Michael Bassett's discussion of Phil Amos in *The Third Labour Government* (1976) indicates what predisposed Amos to be so positive towards Marian and the Chippenham proposal. Before becoming an MP, Amos had spent over thirty years in the education sector as a teacher in small rural, Maori and intermediate schools. He sympathised with and appreciated the concerns of young people in the 1960s and 1970s, and believed much of the disaffection teenagers experienced in high schools was because the schooling system generally had failed to adapt to social change. Bassett (1976) claims:

He [Amos] read widely, and while a Minister, it was not uncommon to find him studying some new book on trends in education. There was no one in Caucus with a better feel about where education should be heading (219).

When Marian approached Phil Amos on behalf of Chippenham, he was already familiar with the Parkway Program and of the conviction the New Zealand education system could develop similar programmes to make education relevant to life beyond school for many young people. Without new ideas, he claimed, schools and educational institutions tended to become fossilised and irrelevant (Phil Amos, as quoted in *Education Reporter*, 1975: 2). While undoubtedly enthusiastic, Amos' response to the Chippenham proposal, nevertheless, should not be seen as indiscriminate and uncritical. Amos was an experienced and well-read educator (Bassett, 1976: 219); and as John Cough points out, part of the appeal of Four Avenues to the Minister was that it was modelled on an overseas programme that had been successful:

I have the utmost respect for the people who got that off the ground. As I said

before the Parkway model was a brilliant piece of lateral thinking for most of the older youth who wouldn't go to school. They were clustered around the parkway, so the idea was to go wherever they would go. And they'd get them into work. So the underlying principle of Four Avenues in those days was work experience. Every student had a work component in their programme. You can see that it was a very attractive proposition (interview, 28 August 2002).

While the community participation programme was a radical idea, it was nonetheless not an untried idea—particularly in the United States. Furthermore, almost coinciding with the approach Chippenham made to the Minister was Bremer and Moschizer's (1971) account of the history and development of the Parkway Program in Philadelphia, which managed to convince many that it was a resounding success and that it was *the way* that many young people would participate in high school in the future. The idea of Four Avenues also seemed to offer a solution to the perennial problem of “tail-enders” in the state schooling system. That is, young people who were disaffected with secondary schooling, erratic in their work habits and only remaining in education until they reached the legal school-leaving age. With its component of work experience, Amos believed programmes such as Four Avenues would fulfil an important role. In his own words, it would:

Encourage alternative forms of education which are able to channel the questioning of young people in a direction which will be complementary to our society.<sup>24</sup>

### **The Third Labour Government, the Education Development Conference**

Chippenham not only benefited from having a Minister of Education who was familiar progressive theories and leading educational trends, it also benefited from having the idea of Four Avenues coincide with the term of the Third Labour Government. Bassett (1998) argues the Third Labour Government was reformist in outlook, and that during its three years in office it worked with a sense of urgency to implement major systemic changes in New Zealand's public sector (325). The establishment of alternative high schools like Four

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<sup>24</sup>Phil Amos quoted in the *Christchurch Star*, 26 May 1975, page number unknown. Sourced from Archives New Zealand, Christchurch Office: Reference Number: CH 690.

Avenues and Auckland Metropolitan College was a part of this wider program. Labour lent a degree of political legitimacy to the radical counter-culture and communes like Chippenham by promising to fund them through an *ohu* scheme in its 1972 election campaign. When it came to education, Labour pledged in its 1972 manifesto to expand community-based learning. It did this by providing grants in its 1973 Budget for hobby classes and assisting schools like Aorere High School in South Auckland and Hagley High School in Christchurch to develop second-chance education programmes for mature students. The Third Labour Government also paved the way for the opening of new community colleges, like one at Otatara in Hawkes Bay (Bassett, 1976: 31-32). The establishment of Four Avenues was described by Phil Amos as a “milestone” in his government’s efforts to innovate in education and provide more equality of opportunity (Education Reporter, 1975: 2).

One of the most conspicuous ways in which Labour showed a commitment to reform in the state education system was with the Education Development Conference, held in August 1972 at Lopdell House in Waitakere. The Conference consisted of several working parties that were organised to examine and report on different areas of education such as *Educational Aims and Objectives* (1974a) and *Improving Teaching and Learning* (1974b). Marion Logeman was a member of one of the working parties, even though the planning for opening Four Avenues was well underway before the Conference took place. The Conference’s aim was to encourage different and more flexible styles of education within the state system. As *Improving Teaching and Learning* (1974b) put it:

These guidelines would indicate both general aims and more particular goals and which would allow considerable freedom in planning and implementing appropriate programmes (132).

The *Educational Aims and Objectives* report (1974a) was particularly significant. It devoted considerable attention to what its authors believed were the shortcomings of the education system. Running through it was the observation there was more wrong with the state education system than was right with it. It was highly critical of the New Zealand secondary school curricula, pointing out that it had not significantly changed since Clarence Beeby's tenure as Director General of Education in the 1940s. The report raised the issue not only of curriculum content, but also of who was benefiting and not benefiting from it—particularly in relation to Maori and Pakeha inequalities. The Education Development Conference was perhaps one of the few examples in the world of government encouraging educators to read

titles such as *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970), *Deschooling Society* (Illich, 1973), *School is Dead* (Rimmer, 1971) and *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (Postman and Weingartner, 1969)!

Despite the nature of the reading done by some of the working parties, those involved in the Education Development Conference were generally supportive of the existing system. Rather than arguing for a radical and far-reaching overhaul of the status quo, they claimed improvement could be gradual and sustained within existing conditions. To some commentators at the time, the Education Development Conference was a costly public-relations exercise that was long on platitudinous sentiments, but short on substantive proposals. Whatever its permanent value may have been, the Education Development Conference nevertheless helped to make educational change a *public issue* in the 1970s. For individuals like Marian and Walter Logeman in Christchurch and David Hoskins in Auckland—who was instrumental in establishing Four Avenues sister school in the state system, Auckland Metropolitan College in 1977—it helped to create the circumstances in which their proposals for alternative state schools were plausible—credible enough that they merited serious consideration on the part of the Minister and Department of Education.

## ***Conclusion***

This chapter has provided an account of Four Avenues' composition in the six months between the Minister of Education's announcement of the school's establishment and its official opening in May 1975. It has discussed the opening of Four Avenues in terms of its need for facilities, and it has shown the appeal Four Avenues held for some of its original teachers and students. This chapter has given an account of what Four Avenues' original philosophy was and of how it was supposed to work.

Chapter 3 has also looked at the social context in which Four Avenues emerged and it has considered how that context contributed to the school's establishment. This chapter has argued the 1960s counter-culture contributed to Four Avenues' emergence, particularly through the influence it had on educational writing in the 1960s and 1970s. And it has discussed how the experiences of Marian and Walter Logeman had a part in the development of the idea of starting Four Avenues.

Chapter 3 moreover has discussed how the idea of establishing an alternative secondary schooling programme generated debates over the advantages and disadvantages of having it as part of the state education system. This part has discussed how egalitarian sentiments among the members of Chippenham community, and the conviction the state ought to provide a variety of approaches to education, had the ascendancy over arguments that Four Avenues should be a private alternative. Important in terms of Chippenham approaching the state about establishing Four Avenues was the influence of Marian Logeman. She was more positive in her attitudes towards the state than others in Chippenham and had a practical sense when it came to working within the context of mainstream government policies. It was this sense which she was able put to good use in advocating the Chippenham proposal, and it was a crucial component in terms of Four Avenues' establishment in the state system.

Lastly, this chapter has returned to the issue of the social and political context of Four Avenues' development. Chapter 3 has discussed what it was about the context of New Zealand education in the 1970s that contributed to Four Avenues opening. In this connection, it has looked at three features in this environment that were directly consequential. These were: 1) a tradition of progressivism in New Zealand education, 2) a Minister of Education that was favourable to experimentation in state education and 3) a Labour Government that had an agenda of implementing significant change in state education. This section has outlined what progressivism is, and argued that its influence in New Zealand education in the twentieth century and the revival of it in the 1970s lent a sense of cogency to the idea of establishing Four Avenues. Chapter 3 has discussed in some detail Marion Logeman's interaction with the Minister of Education. It has argued the Minister's own personal history and interest in progressive, student-centred theories of education were important in Chippenham's cause. This chapter has shown that Chippenham's idea of a community participation programme corresponded with the three-year term of the Third Labour Government in the 1970s. Discussing the Education Development Conference, this chapter has argued it was Labour's commitment to educational reform that contributed to the plausibility of establishing an alternative learning programme like Four Avenues in the state education system.

All of these features contributed to the historical *timeliness* of Four Avenues. Yet they did not make the appearance of Four Avenues historically inevitable by any means. Establishing Four Avenues required still the overcoming over many difficulties—for example, the fact Four

Avenues could not exist as an independent programme according to the regulations of the Education Act 1964. The confrontation of these difficulties before the school started is the subject matter of the following chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

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### *Establishment*

*The protagonists won the right to proceed after several lengthy ... meetings and only then because they had prepared, written and presented their case with such care. This was, and must always be, the essential step in the establishment of anything new. If more orthodox colleagues are to be convinced, the case for innovation has to be thoroughly prepared and well-presented. This is also the case for the success of an enterprise after it has won approval, lest good intentions meander into insignificance. Finally, it needs to be presented in such a way as to be least threatening to uncommitted colleagues. Fear is a great restraining force.*

—Jack Shallcrass (1976: 262).

### ***Introduction***

The last chapter discussed Four Avenues' beginnings, looking at the ways in which the social and political situation of New Zealand in the early 1970s contributed to the school's origins. It argued that while this environment was important in enabling Four Avenues to open, that the school opened in the state system was far from inevitable. Apart from Auckland Metropolitan College, all the other alternative schools started in the 1960s and 1970s were private institutions. The government therefore was willing to allow groups of individuals to independently establish and fund educational alternatives for themselves in the private sphere. Yet for the government to support and fund the establishment of these schools in the state education system: that was a departure from previous practice.



This change in terms of governmental practice was made possible by a Labour government and Minister of Education sympathetic to experimentation in the state education system. Yet even with these favourable circumstances, Chippenham still had to deal with many difficulties before Four Avenues could be established as a state programme. This chapter focuses on one particular issue and looks at the way in which one particular institutional actor, the Department of Education, dealt with it.

The problem, the first section shows, was to do with the *legal status* of Four Avenues. The Education Act 1964 provided no legislative framework in which an alternative secondary schooling programme could start. Through the letters of the Department of Education's District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools in Christchurch, this section introduces the legal problem around establishing Four Avenues and provides an account of how it was resolved. In the process, it covers the Department of Education's initial reaction to the Chippenham proposal and discusses how attitudes evolved once the Department realised Chippenham was serious about establishing Four Avenues. Along with discussing the District Senior Inspector's suggested solution to the legal problem of starting Four Avenues, this chapter examines what his original thinking was on Four Avenues and discusses the way in which members of the school understood his attitude. By providing a discussion of the positive things he had to say about the Chippenham proposal, this chapter suggests his perspective was more complex than that of outright opposition to Four Avenues.

The second section presents an overview of the Director General of Secondary Education's (1974b) report on establishing Four Avenues and discusses the way the Department went about resolving the legal issues surrounding Four Avenues. The Chippenham proposal could go ahead if an establishing secondary school was willing to make it an attached unit or department of itself. Hagley High School was seen as the ideal candidate. The Hagley Board of Governors were initially, however, unwilling to become involved with Four Avenues. This section looks at how the Hagley Board's aversion to being involved with Four Avenues was affected by two things: negative impressions of the members and activities of the Chippenham community and Hagley's own particular history as a school. By examining correspondence between the Hagley Board and the Southern Regional Office of the Department of Education, this section discusses the conditions that Hagley laid down for being associated with Four Avenues. These conditions centred around two things: *responsibility* and *identity*. Hagley did not want to assume direct responsibility for Four Avenues. The only authority it wanted to have over Four Avenues was that of nominal authority. Responsibility for running Four

Avenues would be delegated by the Hagley Board to a management committee that would deal directly with the Department of Education and was immediately responsible to it. Hagley did not want to be associated or linked with Four Avenues either. While the Hagley Board recognised that Four Avenues would be legally part of its own school, it wanted the programme to run independently of Hagley and be as publicly disassociated from it as much as possible.

The Hagley Board, however, did eventually accept attachment with Four Avenues. The third section discusses three things that affected Hagley's change of attitude here. The first was the support the Chippenham proposal had from the Principal of Hagley High School from 1973. The second was that Hagley's desire for disassociation from Four Avenues corresponded with Four Avenues' own desire to function and operate as an independent secondary schooling programme. The District Senior Inspector, thirdly, had a role in affecting a change of outlook on the part of the Hagley Board. Through correspondence of his, this section shows how the Hagley Board became reconciled with the idea of "hosting" Four Avenues, because the Department of Education substantially conceded to Hagley's demands.

The final section raises the issue of what led the District Senior Inspector who was not enthusiastic about Four Avenues to work to establish it. Two explanations were provided by interviewees. One is that these actors were under direct political pressure from the Minister of Education to establish Four Avenues. Another is that negative media coverage of the Department of Education embarrassed it and hastened its efforts in establishing Four Avenues. The first explanation makes sense of why the District Senior Inspector may have expended much effort in establishing Four Avenues, even though he was not personally sympathetic to it. The second explanation is more substantiated by the textual evidence. Both suggest the Department of Education was sensitive to negative media portrayals of its actions. Yet, they also indicate that the Department was not the main obstruction in getting Four Avenues established. The Department could only move at the pace other that actors were willing to move. Therefore, this chapter tentatively suggests external political pressure was an important factor in getting Hagley to change its mind about Four Avenues. In this respect, it suggests Four Avenues' opening was contingent on direct pressure by the Minister of Education.

## ***Chippenham and the Department of Education***

### **The Chippenham Proposal and the Education Act 1964**

In October 1973, the Department of Education's District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools in Christchurch met with Walter Logeman to discuss the Chippenham proposal (District Senior Inspector Of Secondary Schools, 1973). He explained during this meeting the Chippenham proposal for Four Avenues could not constitute 'secondary schooling' as the 1964 Education Act defined it, and that to be viable either the Act would need to be amended or the proposal modified. The proposal did not address points that were critical for the Act: like who would act as *in loco parentis* for children in the programme, or who would be legally responsible for the base rooms, furniture and equipment and who coordinators would be attached to for a salary, and so on. Set in the statutes of the 1964 Education Act were assumptions about what secondary schooling was that seemed to *a priori* discount the idea of a school such as Four Avenues ever coming into existence. The issue therefore was one of how to get around this problem and establish Four Avenues legally as a secondary schooling programme.

When Chippenham approached the Department of Education early in 1973 about the establishing Four Avenues, the District Senior Inspector and others within the Department did not take the idea all that seriously. Although the authors of the proposal were without doubt sincere in their ideas, the District Senior Inspector thought, he did not see it as feasible. As he put it in the context of a newspaper interview (Education Reporter, 1980), in talking about educational progressivism more generally:

Teachers had the right idea but *the wrong approach*. In their efforts to be progressive, they and the administration had shaken the system too much. Education should return to the middle of the road (Education Reporter, 1980: 3, emphasis added).

Progressive educators, in other words, were genuine and had implemented their pedagogic theories with the best of intentions, but this had created extremism in the education system and a departure from a golden mean or centre, which the District Senior Inspector saw his views as representing. Likewise, when Chippenham first approached the Department of

Education, it received the message Four Avenues was “a good idea” but unworkable in terms of approach. This frustrated those in Chippenham who envisaged a great deal of consistency between the philosophy and pedagogic approach of Four Avenues. The response of “you’ve got a good idea but it’s unrealistic” suggested to them the Department of Education did not take either the philosophy or the approach of the Chippenham proposal that seriously.

Added to this scepticism about the feasibility of the Chippenham proposal was that most of those behind it were considered “hippies” and part of the radical counter-culture by the Department of Education. People in the Department thus assumed that once the members of Chippenham were over their initial enthusiasm for Four Avenues that they would (like the stereotypical “hippy”) loose interest when it came to the specifics and difficulties of establishing a new school. This was Walter Logeman’s perception in his early dealings with the Department:

I can remember talking to them. It was just like being in one of Kafka’s novels. It was just the bureaucracy and impossibility [emphasis] of it! [pause]. We were living in a commune with long hair and I probably walked around in my shorts and bare feet and stuff and I wasn’t particularly interested in. I mean I would get dressed up a bit if I went and talked in a school. But if I was dropping a letter off to the Department of Education, I’d just be back from whatever I was doing, gardening or something. And they actually didn’t believe we’d get off the ground. That’s the other thing, the credibility that we had with the Department of Education was zero. They just didn’t believe it would happen (interview, 20 May 2002).

As well as approaching the Department of Education at the regional level, Chippenham was “working in higher places at the same time” (Walter Logeman, interview, 20 May 2002). As chapter 3 pointed out, Marian was a member of one of the Third Labour Government’s Education Development Conference working parties and by the time Chippenham had approached the Southern Regional Office of the Department of Education, Labour’s Minister of Education Phil Amos had already expressed interest and enthusiasm in establishing Four Avenues. Moreover, before approaching the Department, Chippenham had gained interest and support from a number of prominent individuals, groups and organisations. As Walter puts it:

Another 50 letters went to the government. Because we sent them out [pause].

There was this [pause]. I cannot remember the exact stages. But before it [the community participation programme proposal] went out to 200 people. We sent 200 letters out, I think we got 50 or 60 or maybe even more letters back of support from the unions, manufacturer's association. (Interview, 20 May 2002).

At the national level, Jack Shallcrass, the Victoria University educator and *Listener* education columnist gave support (see Shallcrass, 1976). Locally, John Brown, education reporter for *The [Christchurch] Press* expressed keen interest and support, as did the Headmaster of Hagley High School, the Christchurch Teachers' College and the University of Canterbury's Education Department. "Every educationalist in the bloody country," Walter says with obvious exaggeration, "supported the damn thing" (interview, 20 May 2002).

Chippenham put much energy into disseminating information about its proposal. The support it gained from the Minister of Education, New Zealand academics and the wider community showed the Department of Education that Chippenham wanted to be taken seriously and that it wanted its proposal to be a credible one. As Jack Shallcrass put it in talking about establishing educational alternatives in the state system more generally:

"If more orthodox colleagues are to be convinced, the case for innovation has to be thoroughly prepared and well presented. ... It needs to be presented in such a way as to be least threatening to uncommitted colleagues (1976: 262).

Chippenham fulfilled these requirements in presenting its proposal for Four Avenues to the Department of Education. In her interview for this thesis, Marian Hobbs talks of a shift in attitude on the part of the Department once it believed Chippenham was serious and prepared to follow the proposal for establishing Four Avenues through:

In those days. If you did things by the book. Once we got Ian Leggat and the Board of Hagley's support and we laid things out. That was probably my part of the job was to do all those sorts of things and we laid it out and we showed we had community support and all those sorts of letters and things and there was interest and I don't think there was a hellishly great expenditure in it. We showed that model out there. It was worth taking a risk and they [the Department of Education] did it (interview, 21 August 2002).

## **Solution to the Legislative Problem**

By early 1974, the issue was thus not mainly over whether Four Avenues was going to eventuate, but over how it was going to be established within the framework of the Education Act 1964. A shift from the former to the latter concern is noticeable in a report written by the District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools on the feasibility of the Chippenham proposal in March 1974 (District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools, 1974a). As far as the legal difficulties of establishing Four Avenues were concerned, he suggested many of them “would be overcome if an established school were to take the scheme under its wing and run it parallel to a normal intake” (District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools, 1974a). Along with fulfilling legislative requirements, such a solution, he believed, would have three advantages:

1. Students could more easily integrate back into a “mainstream secondary school” if the scheme did not work for them (District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools, 1974a).
2. The scheme could be more easily evaluated (District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools, 1974a).
3. The resources of an existing school could be drawn upon when needed to satisfy the needs of pupils in the scheme (District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools, 1974a).

These points were the District Senior Inspector’s constructive suggestions for getting around the framework of the Education Act 1964. Nevertheless, other remarks in the same report show he was not comfortable with the pedagogic assumptions of the Chippenham proposal. To provide four examples: first, the District Senior Inspector claimed the presupposition the best learning was *self-motivated* was at best a haphazard method of learning for most students, who did not in his experience have the discipline and patience to persevere with most learning tasks without external pedagogic guidance (District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools, 1974a).

Next, the District Senior Inspector was concerned the proposed structure of Four Avenues would not ensure students learned the “essential skills” of the curriculum (District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools, 1974a). Most students did not have, he argued, the internal motivation to learn the core subjects without teacher compulsion in many instances. Since the

“essentials” were often difficult and demanding to learn, most students would not realise the relevance and importance of them until well into their educational careers. With the Chippenham proposal’s emphasis on what he saw to be the educational equivalent of libertarian freedom, the District Senior Inspector was concerned that *if given the choice* the majority of students would not opt to pursue a course of study that included adequate concentration on the “basics” (District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools, 1974a).

The District Senior Inspector had concerns too about the assumption that self-motivation was a universal characteristic in children and that the best teaching method was to let them follow their personal preferences (District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools, 1974a). A teaching style that emphasised the distinctive attitudes of deference to authority, obedience, discipline, persistence and self-control on the part of the learner was generally more effective for most students, he believed. He also felt the Chippenham proposal’s reduction of the teacher’s role to that of “coordinator” did not capture what was most important about the pedagogic task in high schools: the ability to make the curriculum appealing and engaging to all students. Talented students, especially, needed more intensive, structured and formal tuition than Four Avenues planned to provide if they were not to be slowed down in learning. “Mental stimulation and rate of progress in fields that interest him [sic] “will be too slow if he is left long out in the community where tasks are usually highly repetitive” (District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools, 1974a).

Four Avenues also needed “constant supervision and evaluation” (District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools, 1974a). The District Senior Inspector’s suggestion Four Avenues attach itself to an established secondary school was not only presented as a means of resolving the legal issues around the Education Act 1964, but as a method of monitoring Four Avenues as well. This can be seen in one of the three advantages that the District Senior Inspector enumerated in relation to his suggestion of an attachment relationship for Four Avenues: making the school part of an existing secondary school would mean that it could be easily evaluated (District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools, 1974a). As he himself put it, such an arrangement would enable “good control” to be exercised over the programme and the “correction of wrong moves before they went too far (District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools, 1974c).

Lastly, implicit in all of these comments was the assumption on the part of the District Senior Inspector that the New Zealand state secondary schooling system, despite all of its

shortcomings, was the best of all possible worlds as far as educating teenagers was concerned. “After all,” he argued, “schools were instituted to correct the deficiencies of a system of education similar to that which the Logeman scheme proposes” (District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools, 1974c). Thus, he believed that it was the state’s responsibility to invest in gradually *improving* the existing system rather than funding a plethora of untried educational alternatives. Alternatives were legitimate in the private sphere, but in the public, it was best to persevere with an established system that had worked for the majority people, he argued, gradually pushing it towards change and modification when needed. This method would avoid “shaking the system” with the hasty application of well-intentioned but misguided reforms and ensure that it stayed “middle of the road” (Education Reporter, 1980: 3).

The District Senior Inspector’s preference for improving the existing education system rather than experimenting with alternatives did not sit easily with the assumptions of the Chippenham proposal document. The document maintained that it was the *responsibility* of the state to fund a number of different educational alternatives to provide more adequately for individual student need (Chippenham Community, No Date: 3). In the 1970s, the staff of Four Avenues felt that all too often the Department of Education confused “improving” the established schooling system with preserving the traditional “trappings” of secondary school. As former Four Avenues Director John Clough says:

I’d say it [the Department of Education’s view of Four Avenues] was very negative. It was based around the more obvious trappings of school like uniforms or the lack of them. Four Avenues had no uniform, that was anathema, and it just wasn’t a school without a uniform! And some of the children [pause]. I shouldn’t say children [pause] young people smoked and they would walk across Cramner Square right in front of the Department’s offices with no uniforms and smoking (interview, 28 August 2002).

According to John, the “administrative hierarchy” in the Department of Education identified their own values about what properly constituted secondary schooling with what was in the interest of the educational field and students more generally—improving the quality of learning for young people. The “hierarchy” could not envisage that any form of effective learning could occur without the symbols and structures of traditional pedagogic discipline: uniforms, having teenagers confined in a particular place under the supervision of a teacher for a period, not allowing them to smoke.



The District Senior Inspector likewise had concerns over the fact the Chippenham proposal contained little of the mechanisms and controls of established pedagogic practice. He also “had little confidence in the group that put forward these proposals” and preferred a form of “gradual change” when it came to systemic reforms in education (District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools, 1974c). Nonetheless, his initial stance in relation to the Chippenham proposal was more complex than that of outright misgiving and opposition. This was evident in three ways.

First, in his discussion of the Chippenham proposal, he acknowledged that a disproportionate concern for a “general education” in mainstream high schools had not met the needs of many students who required something more “saleable in the outside world” (District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools, 1974a). The merit of the Chippenham proposal, he argued, was its appreciation of something that most schools generally lacked: the “reality of society” and the understanding that preparation for being an active member in it is the ultimate aim of education (District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools, 1974a). The District Senior Inspector also reflected the argument of the Chippenham proposal and Dewey (1938) discussed in the last chapter: that the ultimate aim of schooling is preparation for life outside education and that schooling should provide the opportunity for students to gain stimulus from real life situations (District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools, 1974a).

Second, although the District Senior believed much of the animus of the Chippenham proposal came from dubious and exaggerated adult assumptions about the rigidity of high schools and their authoritarianism, he did believe there was “much room for greater relaxation of controls in secondary education and a positive approach to encourage and support divergent approaches to learning” (District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools, 1974a).

Finally, when it came to the process of establishing Four Avenues, the District Senior Inspector placed Graham Robinson, a person he considered one of his most able and talented staff members, in the position of Director of Four Avenues, relieving him of his normal duties as a Departmental Inspector. In a series of letters to the District Senior Inspector and Director General of Secondary Education, Graham expressed his “excitement” over the “opportunity” of working with the Chippenham proposal and developing it into Four Avenues.<sup>25</sup> This suggests the attitude of the Southern Regional Office of the Department of Education was not

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<sup>25</sup>This correspondence is found in the Christchurch Office of Archives New Zealand. Reference Number: CH 690.

as monolithically opposed to the idea of an educational alternative as some at Four Avenues later assumed.

Colley (2002) argues the form of public service represented by the District Senior Inspector and the Department of Education in the 1970s was “a bureaucratic model of employment aligned to the bureaucratic form of public administration, based on strong conventions of merit, tenure, political neutrality and a unified service, administered by an independent central authority” (349). This perhaps helps us to appreciate the ambivalent stance of the District Senior Inspector towards Four Avenues in the mid-1970s. Most of the enthusiasm for establishing Four Avenues came from the Minister of Education and Chippenham. Despite the District Senior Inspector's misgivings about the viability of the Chippenham proposal, he did not understand his role as that of being a hindrance. As he put it in a letter to the Director General of Secondary Education (District Senior Inspector, 1974c), “My personal feelings ... will in no way prejudice my giving the scheme all the help I can.” The convention and posture of political neutrality and independence Colley (2002) identifies in the post-War public service also perhaps helps us to appreciate some of the reasons why the District Senior Inspector worked to establish Four Avenues in spite of his suspicions about the school's pedagogic merits.

## ***The Department of Education and Hagley High School***

### **Chippenham and Hagley High School**

The Director General of Secondary Education (1974b) prepared a report for the Minister of Education on establishing Four Avenues. By the end of May 1974, this report had gained authorisation (Director General of Secondary Education, 1974a; 1974b). The report, nevertheless, highlighted a number of organisational issues that needed to be resolved before Four Avenues could start.

First, the report was concerned about the actual levels of community support for Four Avenues. While Chippenham had received many letters of support from various community organisations and groups, and promises that they would help in any way they could, there was concern on the part of the Director General that the translation of this support into something

more tangible and ongoing would be a major undertaking. Consequently, a contingency plan, he argued, needed to be considered and developed for the possible inability of the community and infrastructure of Christchurch city “to provide the range of activities necessary or desirable” for a student’s education (Director General of Secondary Education, 1974b).

Second, to operate within the framework of the Education Act 1964, particularly in terms of staffing entitlement, salaries and financial grants, he suggested Four Avenues needed:

1. A host school to act as the “controlling authority” of Four Avenues and be ultimately responsible for its employment of its tutors and the control of finances (Director General of Secondary Education, 1974b).
2. Provisions for buildings (Director General of Secondary Education, 1974b).
3. A formal “host school-attached unit relationship” with Hagley High School (Director General of Secondary Education, 1974b).

Before Phil Amos had approved the proposals in the Director General’s report, representatives from Chippenham had approached the Hagley High School Board of Governors early in 1974 about a formal host school/attached unit relationship. According to the District Senior Inspector (1973c), this caused immediate confusion on the part of the Hagley Board, especially when the Chippenham representative referred to a “community participation programme.” The Hagley Board wrote to the Department of Education in response asking whether a high school could legally be a “community centre” under the provisions of the Education Act 1964. Confusion on the part of the Hagley Board was caused, the District Senior Inspector (1973c) claimed, because the Chippenham representative casually referred to a “community participation programme,” not understanding that under the relevant legislation the term ‘community’ had a specific meaning (Director General of Secondary Education, 1974a). While this turned out to be a relatively small misunderstanding, from the outset it only confirmed the suspicions of the Hagley Board that those behind Chippenham lack professionalism or competency.

When the District Senior Inspector formally approached Hagley High School about acting as a “host school” for Four Avenues, the Hagley Board of Governors were reluctant to assume responsibility for it. In the early 1970s, Hagley was struggling to enhance its reputation as a secondary school after being synonymous with low-achieving students and “dropouts” for most of the 1950s and 1960s. It had changed its name from Christchurch West High School to

Hagley High School in 1974, dropped the requirement for senior students to wear uniforms, and was in the first year of implementing second-chance adult education programmes for those who wanted to return to secondary school to gain formal qualifications. The Hagley Board, therefore, were concerned that public association with an untried alternative education scheme such as the Four Avenues would not enhance its tenuous image in Christchurch. In addition, they were concerned that direct involvement with Four Avenues would place extra demands on the already stretched Board and Headmaster of Hagley High School. As Four Avenues' Director put it in a letter to the President of the Post Primary Teachers' Association in 1975:

The Board members [of Hagley] were not entirely enthusiastic [about Four Avenues' attachment] because of the possible harmful effects on Hagley's image as well as the demands that would be made on the Board, and in particular on its Principal. They did not want the name of an alternative school closely attached to Hagley High School" (Letter dated 19 February 1975, cited in Hagley Community College, 1993a).

### **Hagley's Requirements for Attachment with Four Avenues**

In July 1974, the Hagley Board of Governors wrote a letter to the Department of Education setting out the "conditions under which it might become associated with Four Avenues" (Hagley High School Board of Governors, 1974). The Board had three demands before they would enter into a formal relationship with Four Avenues. First, it wanted its connection with Four Avenues to be a nominal one only (Hagley High School Board of Governors, 1974). The Board would delegate direct responsibility for the management of Four Avenues to a special committee (Hagley High School Board of Governors, 1974).

Second, the Board maintained that a connection with Four Avenues would only be for the purposes of funding, providing what the Board described as a "watching responsibility" when it came to the use of Department of Education funds by Four Avenues (Hagley High School Board of Governors, 1974). In language as convoluted as it was precise, the Hagley Board claimed it would act as the "bridgehead" between Four Avenues and the Department of Education. It would only offer Four Avenues guidance in administrative matters and knowledge. In undertaking this role, Hagley would encourage Four Avenues to develop

relationships with other schools and community organisations and facilities (Hagley High School Board of Governors, 1974).

The Hagley Board also demanded that two key terms needed to be in any relationship it might have with Four Avenues: ‘responsibility’ and ‘identity’. When it came to responsibility, the Board did not want to be legally responsible for the running of Four Avenues in the same way it was responsible for the running of Hagley High School. The Board had concerns that if Four Avenues experienced severe difficulties, or even failed, then Hagley would face full responsibility for the problems that ensued. In particular, the Board was concerned that Hagley would have to “pick up” students for enrolment outside of its zoning area if Four Avenues experienced difficulties or even failed (Hagley High School Board of Governors, 1974).

To prevent a scenario like this from happening, the Board argued their responsibility for Four Avenues should be defined as a “monitoring responsibility.” This would be for the specific purpose of channelling Department of Education financial grants to Four Avenues, as the Education Act 1964 required. The Hagley Board of Governors would delegate responsibility for Four Avenues to an “Interim Council” that would have responsibility for professional and administrative matters, including building, equipment and staffing matters. This council, rather than the Hagley Board of Governors, would for all practical purposes have “controlling authority” within Four Avenues and be responsible to the Department of Education in the same way the Hagley Board of Governors was responsible for Hagley. In effect, the Four Avenues’ council would function as a proxy Board of Governors, even though they would not have this legal status.

When it came to issues of identity, the Hagley Board argued Four Avenues should have its own identity and a level of “autonomy almost as complete as that of other state schools” (Hagley High School Board of Governors, 1974). Hence, the Hagley Board required the absence of terminology in any formal agreement with Four Avenues that connoted a close working relationship—like “side school,” “department,” “outpost,” “controlling authority,” “host school,” “back up school” and “safety net” and so on. Such terminology suggested a “formal, structuring, controlling link” which Hagley did not want to assume when it came to Four Avenues (Hagley High School Board of Governors, 1974).

The Hagley Board was uneasy with the way the Chippenham proposal had been linked with

Hagley High School in the Christchurch media. They wanted to minimise this link, so a requirement of any attachment agreement was that any public reference to Hagley's relationship with Four Avenues would be confined to a "limited monitoring role" (Hagley High School Board of Governors, 1974). In stipulating this, the Board wanted Four Avenues not to develop closer ties with Hagley than it might with other state schools in Christchurch. The Board essentially wanted Four Avenues to be as independent from Hagley as it would be from any other secondary school.

### ***Acceptance of Attachment by Hagley High School***

The conditions laid down in the Hagley Board's correspondence with the Department of Education corroborate the Four Avenues' Director's claim above that the Board was initially unwilling to enter into any public association with, or assume any direct responsibility for the Chippenham proposal (Letter to President of the Post-Primary Teachers' Association, dated 19 February 1975, in Hagley Community College, 1993a). However, by the time Four Avenues opened in 1975, the Hagley Board had entered into a formal attachment with Four Avenues. Three developments in the ten months between the time it expressed its initial views in writing to the Department and the time Four Avenues opened affected the Board's change of attitude towards attachment to Four Avenues.

The support, first, of the Principal of Hagley High for Four Avenues was influential in effecting a change of outlook on the part of the Board. The Principal of Hagley High School was among one of the many individuals and organisations that Chippenham sent its proposal to in 1973. He provided to be one of Four Avenues' most enthusiastic supporters and advocates. After reading Chippenham's submission to the Minister, he wrote:

I have read the proposal with a great deal of interest and feel that it deserves support. The scheme has been well considered and it offers an exciting alternative to present schooling. Our schools are having difficulties in changing to meet the changing demands which are being placed on them. There is a need for schools to experiment with new approaches in their attempts to keep today's children. One such approach is outlined here. The small groups of children of different ages, the close involvement with the community, the freedom from the classroom are

aspects of the plan which appear valuable. Support for and encouragement of different ways of educating small groups of children within the state system is likely to suggest ways of improving the education provided for all children. I would like to see this scheme in operation (Headmaster Hagley High School, 1973).

The desire moreover of the Hagley Board of Governors not to have Hagley High School too closely connected to Four Avenues corresponded with the intention of the Chippenham proposal supporters to have Four Avenues function and run as an independent programme. In the proposal, Four Avenues was envisaged as directly state controlled and financed through Department of Education (Chippenham Community, No Date: 9). Having state support would ensure the confidence of the wider Christchurch community in Four Avenues, and it would allow equal opportunity for all to participate in it, regardless of economic or social background (Chippenham Community, No Date: 9). Hence, the Hagley Board's reluctance to be identified with an alternative school and Four Avenues' desire to function independently coalesced into a deal convenient for both when it came to the details of an attachment between the two schools. As the Director of Four Avenues put it in the letter to the President of the Post-Primary Teachers' Association referred to above:

Hagley did not want it [attachment with Four Avenues] and we ourselves [Four Avenues] want to be seen to function as an independent school ... In law, however, the students of Four Avenues are students of Hagley High School and Four Avenues' staff are Hagley's staff while Hagley's Principal is our Principal. Neither the students, the staff nor the public need to be aware of this situation (Director, Four Avenues, letter to John Fletcher, President of the Post Primary Teachers' Association, dated 19 February 1975, cited in Hagley Community College 1993a).<sup>26</sup>

The District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools also had a significant part to play in bringing about the attachment between Hagley and Four Avenues. His correspondence with the Director General (1974c) indicates some of the problems he faced in getting Hagley to agree to an attachment with Four Avenues. As close to Four Avenues' opening as July 1974, there was still "sharp division" within the Board over whether Hagley should have any association with Four Avenues (District Senior Inspector, 1974c). Only the Chairman and

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<sup>26</sup>The ellipse in this letter quoted is original to the source document from which it is taken.

another member of the Board supported any kind of attachment, the rest “had little confidence in the group that had put forward the proposals” (District Senior Inspector, 1974c).

The Board had reservations about the professional standards of those behind the Chippenham proposal (District Senior Inspector, 1974c). For example, before the details of the attachment between Hagley and the Department had even been formalised, Chippenham upset Hagley and the Department by advertising in a publication called *Church and Community*, claiming Four Avenues was opening in January 1975 and that enrolments were being taken (District Senior Inspector, 1974c). What annoyed the Hagley Board about this publicity was that an announcement about the opening of any new state school could only come from the Department of Education under the name of the Minister of Education or Director General of Secondary Education. The Department was still in the process of negotiating with Hagley, and Four Avenues’ publicity seeking before an official announcement suggested to the Board “a marked lack of responsibility” (District Senior Inspector, 1974c). Even though advertisements like this were deliberate “pressure group tactics” on the part of Four Avenues’ advocates (Walter Logeman, interview, 20 May 2002), they only reinforced the prejudices of many of the members of the Hagley Board towards Four Avenues.

In meeting with the Hagley Board in July 1974, the District Senior Inspector was aware of the aversion they had towards the idea of hosting Four Avenues. It was “obvious that the Board did not accept that the proposal ... [was] a worthwhile alternative to the state school which they control” (District Senior Inspector, 1974c). Since he shared a similar outlook, he sympathised with the Hagley Board’s reluctance to assume responsibility for Four Avenues and recommended that any attachment between the two schools should include the following:

1. Arrangements by the Department of Education “for neighbourhood schools to accept responsibility for any students who leave the scheme” (District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools, 1974a).
2. Assurances by the Department that the scheme would not be tied to Hagley, except to meet certain legal conditions and administrative requirements acceptable to the Hagley Board (District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools, 1974a).
3. Support from the Department for Hagley’s proposal of delegating “controlling authority” for Four Avenues to an administrative committee that would deal directly with the Department (District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools, 1974a).



4. Assurances by the Department that the responsibility for evaluating and monitoring Four Avenues lay with the Department of the Education, Christchurch Teachers' College and the University of Canterbury Department of Education, which had both expressed interest in studying and being a part of the Four Avenues scheme (District Senior Inspector of Secondary Schools, 1974a).

These recommendations corresponded with the conditions laid down by the Hagley Board for attachment with Four Avenues. The District Senior Inspector's communication with the Director General therefore shows that an important stage in effecting the eventual attachment between the two schools was the Department of Education's accommodation to the Hagley Board's stance. As representative of the Department, he worked to ensure that if Hagley entered into an attachment with Four Avenues that issues of responsibility, administration and public association/dissociation with/from Four Avenues would be matters for *the Department of Education to resolve* not Hagley. He assured the Hagley Board he "would be directly involved with Four Avenues "in matters concerned with staffing and equipment" and that "a generous attitude to staffing and expenditure" would be shown by the Department to enable Four Avenues "to get well underway" (District Senior Inspector, 1974c; 1974b: 4).

It is somewhat incongruous that someone who had misgivings and reservations about Four Avenues from the start, and recommended its closure to the National Minister of Education in 1978 (Regional Superintendent of Secondary Schools, 1978), laboured so much in establishing it. Over and above conventions of political neutrality in the public service, two observations by interviewees for this thesis suggest the District Senior Inspector worked to establish Four Avenues because of external pressure from the Minister of Education and the local media.

In speaking of the difficulties of establishing Four Avenues, and the reluctance of Hagley to accept responsibility for it, John Clough relates how Phil Amos eventually told the Hagley Board that they just had to accept the programme:

Most of my dealings [as Director] were with the administrative hierarchy and they didn't see it at all; they wanted it to go away quickly. If you can find all the documentation, you will find that, firstly, there was nothing the Act to allow it to happen. There was no provision in the Education Act [1964] for alternative schools. So it had to be tagged on to some other high school. And none of the

other high schools wanted it. I know the Minister simply told Hagley that it had to happen and they had to take it in the finish (interview, 28 August 2002).

The claim Four Avenues' attachment with Hagley was established by a virtual ministerial directive is understandably not reflected the Department of Education files, which have as their focus the administrative and bureaucratic details of the beginnings of Four Avenues. An issue in using the records of institutions with an avowedly "social" function—like the public service—is all too often they are of a narrowly institutional character. By their very frame of reference, they typically omit the role of politics and the state, as both a constant presence and as a mechanism of power (Tosh, 1991: 101). If John Clough's claim has any factual basis, then it suggests one of the reasons why the District Senior Inspector worked to establish Four Avenues was because of external political pressure. Furthermore, John Clough's claim helps us to appreciate the reasons the District Senior Inspector's opposition to Four Avenues might have crystallised in the late 1970s under a different government. If true, it also helps us to appreciate why the Board eventually accepted attachment to Four Avenues, even after expressing aversion towards the whole programme. Nevertheless, the problem with John Clough's claim is that while it is tantalising and attractive, it is something that has not been corroborated by further evidence and research for this thesis.

Walter Logeman claims the local Christchurch media had a significant role to play in the eventual establishment of Four Avenues. Four Avenues received widespread local and community support, and the Department of Education did not like being portrayed in local newspapers as the obstacle and hindrance to the school's establishment. As he puts it:

And in the end too, the one article, you may find it still: "Dept of Education" Delays Experimental School." They didn't like being the ones who delayed it. The government had approved it, or something like that, and that really got it all moving that article in the paper. It [Four Avenues] just romped in after that (Interview, 20 May 2002).

An analysis of the Department of Education's files on the establishment of Four Avenues held in Archives New Zealand<sup>27</sup> shows the District Senior Inspector was indeed sensitive to potentially negative media representations of his own organisation. Interspersed in the files with communications between different actors in the Department, at both a regional and

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<sup>27</sup>Reference Number CH 690.

national level, are newspaper cuttings relating to Four Avenues from the two local daily newspapers in Christchurch at the time: the *Christchurch Star* and *The Press*. The article mentioned by Walter, 'Experimental school delayed',<sup>28</sup> is included in these files. Although Four Avenues had received ministerial approval and widespread community support, the article argued the school's opening had "become bogged down by planning delays in the Department of Education." John Brown, the education reporter for *The Press*, supported Four Avenues, and this article is seen by Walter as something that made the Department more proactive in establishing it.

The Department did not relish this kind of media coverage. Yet as the discussion above suggests, much of the Department's inactivity at this stage was due to Hagley's unwillingness to enter into an attachment with Four Avenues, rather than because of any deliberate intention on its part to obstruct the start of the programme. As the *Press* article Walter refers to suggests, it was not until the Principal of Hagley High School returned from study leave in August 1974 that the problems surrounding the Hagley's Board's reluctance to be involved in the programme were sufficiently addressed. Thus, negative media coverage may have prompted the Department of Education to speed up the establishment of Four Avenues. However, the discussion above indicates that in establishing Four Avenues, the Department could only move at the pace Hagley was willing to move at. The speed at which the Department could progress, in other words, in establishing Four Avenues was dependent on Hagley. Without the Hagley's Board's eventual willingness to enter into a formal attachment with Four Avenues, Four Avenues could not have been legally established, no matter how the Department acted. Although it would be an exaggeration of John Clough's claim to say the Minister of Education by fiat made Hagley accept attachment with Four Avenues, his claim nonetheless does provide an explanation for why two reluctant actors (the District Senior Inspector and the Hagley Board of Governors), worked to establish Four Avenues, even though they had strong misgivings about it. Thus this chapter ends with the proposal that direct ministerial pressure on the part of Phil Amos was crucial in getting the District Senior Inspector and the Hagley High School Board of Governors to work together in establishing Four Avenues. This claim is only a proposal because it is based on one piece of evidence. Nevertheless, it does provide a tantalising explanation for why the District Senior Inspector and the Hagley Board worked to establish Four Avenues in spite of their misgivings about it.

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<sup>28</sup>*The Press*, 13 August 1974, page number unknown. A copy of this article can be sourced from Archives New Zealand, Reference Number: CH 690.

## ***Conclusion***

This chapter has focused around the problem that an alternative high school like Four Avenues could not be legally established as an independent high school under the framework of the Education Act 1964. Through following the District Senior Inspector's efforts to get around this problem, it has tracked some of his (and the Department of Education's) interactions with both Chippenham and Hagley High School in the mid-1970s. When Chippenham first approached the Southern Regional Office of the Department of Education, the Department was initially sceptical about Four Avenues, seeing it as a bureaucratic and administrative *impossibility*. This negative reaction was partly due to Chippenham's association with the 1960s and 1970s counter-culture. Once the Department realised Chippenham had widespread support, it began to take Four Avenues seriously—seriously enough the District Senior Inspector suggested a way of legally establishing it. This chapter also discussed the District Senior Inspector's expressed thinking on the Chippenham proposal and looked at how that thinking was perceived by those in Chippenham. Counterbalancing the negative things he had to say about scheme with the positive, this chapter has shown his thinking on the school was more complicated than later actors at Four Avenues believed.

Second, this chapter discussed the process the Department of Education went through in establishing Four Avenues. It approached the Hagley High School Board of Governors about attachment to Four Avenues. However, Hagley was unwilling to get involved with an untried alternative education programme. This unwillingness was conditioned by what it thought to be the lack of professionalism in the actions of the Chippenham community and the fear Hagley might be associated with something that brought it bad publicity. In stipulating its conditions for attachment to Four Avenues, Hagley did not want to be legally responsible for the programme or have association with it. However, it did eventually accept attachment with Four Avenues. This acceptance was conditioned by three things: the support of the Hagley Principal for Four Avenues, Hagley's desire for dissociation from Four Avenues coalescing with Four Avenues' aspiration to operate independently, and the Department of Education being able to more or less meet the Hagley Board's demands.

The final part of this chapter moved away from the narrowly institutional concerns of Department of Education archival material and considered more generally what might have caused the Department and the Hagley Board, two sceptical and hesitant actors as far as Four

Avenues' viability was concerned, to have a major part in establishing it. It explored explanations from two interviewees. One is they somewhat reluctantly had a large role to play because of direct pressure from the Minister of Education. The other was negative media coverage hastened the efforts of the Department in establishing Four Avenues. The difficulty with the first claim, however, is it has not been substantiated beyond the claim of one participant in the research for this thesis. The problem with the second is it not fully cognizant of how the Department of Education's ability to establish Four Avenues was dependent on the cooperation of Hagley. Consequently, in getting the cooperation of Hagley in establishing Four Avenues, this chapter suggests the Hagley Board was under the same kind of political pressure from the Minister of Education to establish Four Avenues that the Department was under.

To reiterate the argument of the last two chapters and point forwards. The last chapter looked at the social and political conditions in New Zealand in the 1970s, particularly in the education system, which made the idea of establishing Four Avenues timely. Nevertheless, as this chapter shows, that Four Avenues opened at all was dependent to certain extent upon political influence. The next chapter shows how Four Avenues' survival in the education system was largely contingent on direct political intervention in 1984 by the Minister of Education in the Fourth Labour Government. When it came to the establishment of Four Avenues, such direct political intervention by a Labour Minister was crucial as well.

## CHAPTER V

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### *Threat*

#### *Introduction*

The last two chapters explored the beginnings and establishment of Four Avenues. This chapter focuses on the early 1980s and looks at the first major crisis Four Avenues faced: the decision by the Department of Education to close Four Avenues down. The state was largely enabling and productive for Four Avenues when the school was established both in terms of funding and dealing with a reluctant Hagley High School Board of Governors. Yet by the early 1980s, the government had moved from largely supporting Four Avenues to deciding to close it down. This chapter, first, discusses the Department's decision to close Four Avenues and outlines the stated reasons it used to justify this decision.

Second, this chapter discusses how the state's relationship with Four Avenues developed in the seven years from 1975 to 1982. Important here was the implementation of an expensive National Superannuation Scheme by the government and dismal projections by the Task Force on Economic and Social Planning (1976) and the New Zealand Planning Council (1979) that argued New Zealand's level of public sector spending in the late 1970s was unsustainable in a poorly performing economy.

Third, this chapter considers how the six-year tenure (1978-1984) of Merv Wellington as Minister of Education affected the state's relationship with Four Avenues. It looks at how the fortunes of Four Avenues in the early 1980s were largely bound up with his concerns over getting "back to basics" in the curriculum. It outlines how these concerns on his part developed, and how they came into conflict with the kind of education Four Avenues saw itself as providing.

Fourth, this chapter looks at how developments within Four Avenues influenced the Department of Education's decision to withdraw funding from it. It looks at how Four

Avenues' location was unsuitable for the kind of schooling experience it provided from the mid-1970s onwards. In addition, it discusses how the "school without walls" philosophy on which the establishment of Four Avenues was premised proved untenable for many students. This part examines the ways in which Four Avenues adjusted its overall pedagogy to come to terms with this problem. From the Department of Education's point of view, this part shows how the Department framed this adjustment in terms of "failure" and thus questioned the whole legitimacy of Four Avenues. This part also examines some of the ways in which Four Avenues came to duplicate the courses and programmes of other secondary schools. It considers some of the reasons for why many students may have chosen formal examination courses over the kind of informal, community-based learning Four Avenues was set-up to provide. In the light of wider social and economic changes in the 1970s, it suggests Four Avenues' original "school without walls" philosophy was *untimely* in terms of what most students and their parents wanted from secondary education. Four Avenues was duplicating activities done in other local high schools.

Finally, this chapter highlights four things that enabled Four Avenues to survive and remain in the state education system until 1993. This section looks at representations of Four Avenues in the local media and examines the argument the school repeatedly used in *The Press*: that educational ends were preferable to economic or instrumental ends. This argument was repeatedly employed because it had currency in terms of wider discourses in the New Zealand education system at the time. This section also discusses the role Hagley High School had in Four Avenues continuing beyond 1983. It shows how Four Avenues' status as an attachment unit of Hagley made it difficult for the Minister of Education to close Four Avenues because of an anomaly in the Education Act 1964. In doing this, this section looks at the ways in which working more closely together created tensions between Hagley and Four Avenues. Furthermore, this part discusses the conflict that occurred between the Director and Four Avenues' staff in the early 1980s. It argues Four Avenues' survival and ability to operate functionally as a community was dependent on the Director leaving in 1984. This part discusses the role of the election of the Fourth Labour Government in July 1984 in Four Avenues remaining a part of the state education system. It was Labour's support of Four Avenues, this chapter claims, that enabled Four Avenues to re-establish itself as a separate school and continue as an attached unit of Hagley until 1993.

### ***Four Avenues Threatened***

On the 2 December 1982, the Regional Superintendent of Education (1982) wrote to the Chairman of the Hagley High School Board of Governors informing her the Department of Education's Southern Regional Office had been directed by the Minister of Education to "undertake discussions with your council concerning the possible closure of Four Avenues School" (1). The Department was advised to consider this after a report by the Christchurch Secondary Schools Council claimed the Department's facilities and accommodation exceeded the actual and projected levels of student enrolment in Christchurch (Regional Superintendent of Secondary Education, 1982: 1). The Council argued the Department could save a substantial amount of resources and money if a Christchurch high school was earmarked for closure. This would not disadvantage the students attending the designated school, the Council's report claimed, for the Department would still have enough facilities and accommodation in other local high schools to absorb the students who would be displaced.

Such arguments were particularly appealing to the Department and Minister of Education because established and long-standing state high schools in Christchurch needed large amounts of money for development and building in the early 1980s. Hagley High School was doing away with its traditional student zoning area in 1984, creating a citywide zone for enrolments. Thus, within Christchurch, students who wanted to attend a high school outside of their zoning area would have the option of choosing Hagley if they wanted an educational alternative funded by the state. This made Four Avenues—a non-zoned school of less than 100—an ideal target for closure. High schools that were larger and better resourced than Four Avenues could easily incorporate the students from Four Avenues that fell within their catchments area. Through its doing away of its traditional student zoning area, Hagley would offer the citywide alternative to students that Four Avenues was established to provide in 1975.

Four Avenues' third form enrolments had declined in 1981 and 1982 (Regional Superintendent of Secondary Education, 1982: 1). In March 1982, the number of third form students enrolled with it was 13, while third form enrolments for 1983 were 14. This contrasted with the huge demand for entry-level places within Four Avenues when it first opened. The demand was so great, as chapter 3 showed that enrolments had to be balloted. This decline in entry-level enrolments, the Department claimed, reflected the smaller number



of parents who opted to send their children to Four Avenues for philosophical reasons (Regional Superintendent of Secondary Education, 1982: 1). The school also showed a “considerable bulge at the form five level” (Regional Superintendent of Secondary Education, 1982: 1). This suggested Four Avenues was increasingly attracting adolescents who were having difficulties in conventional secondary schools rather than those who were attending Four Avenues for strong educational reasons.

In terms of Four Avenues’ founding philosophy and charter of being a “school without walls,” the Department argued Hagley High School was more adequately reflecting this with its “wide curriculum options to pupils at all levels and use [of] the community for a wide range of courses” (Regional Superintendent of Secondary Schools, 1982: 2). The Department pointed out Four Avenues was established in its Gloucester Street site “as a base from which pupils would move into the community for their studies” (Regional Superintendent of Secondary Education, 1982: 2). However, since 1975, Four Avenues had moved towards a more formal type of schooling with classrooms and scheduled timetables. It was requiring from the state more resources to run its programmes—accommodation, specialist facilities and equipment—than was initially planned. This move towards a more formal style of education and the increasing amount of resources it was demanding from the state was in disagreement with Four Avenues’ original philosophy, and the argument presented in the Chippenham Community proposal Four Avenues would cost far less to run than other state secondary schools.

The Department of Education pointed out the properties occupied by Four Avenues in Gloucester Street were zoned as “Residential 5A” by the Christchurch City Council (Regional Superintendent of Secondary Schools, 1982: 1). The Department and the Christchurch City Council had received numerous complaints from residents neighbouring Four Avenues about the inappropriateness of a high school within their area (Regional Superintendent of Secondary Education, 1982: 2). One resident, a Mr Matthew J. Glubb, wrote a letter to *The Press* (Anonymous, 1981b) complaining Four Avenues was a “source of continuing noise problem for their residential neighbours” (14). In the light of declining secondary school rolls in Christchurch, the Department argued, it was difficult to justify the presence and location of Four Avenues in a residential neighbourhood (Regional Superintendent of Secondary Education, 1982: 2).

The buildings accommodating Four Avenues required extensive upgrading (Regional

Superintendent of Secondary Education, 1982: 2). The Department estimated it would need to spend “in the vicinity of \$100,000” to bring the school’s Gloucester Street site up to standards it deemed acceptable. There was little justification for this expenditure when there was a surplus of accommodation available in other Christchurch secondary schools for students (Regional Superintendent of Secondary Education, 1982: 2). For this reason, the Department suggested Four Avenues should close at the end of the 1983 school year. Students would be adequately accommodated in other secondary schools, and permanent teaching staff at Four Avenues would be preferentially treated if they decided to apply for other positions within the state secondary school system.

A *Press* (Anonymous, 1983j) editorial claimed with some irony Four Avenues’ impending closure at the end of 1983 was because of its own success and the triumph of the educational theories it had embodied since 1975. Eight years after it had opened, some of the ideas that seemed advanced, and even adventurous in the mid-1970s, had become the norm in other secondary schools. Other schools had introduced work exploration courses into their programmes, in which students could experiment with and try out a range of jobs. Classroom interaction too had become less authoritarian in many high schools, as Teachers College graduates from the 1960s and 1970s took on board the progressive educational theories of the 1970s and adapted them in their classrooms. Four Avenues’ case for remaining open did seem not compelling. Yet, the school continued until the end of 1993, when it was closed after a damning Education Review Office Specific Compliance Audit (1993).

### ***The State’s Changing Relationship to the Educational Field***

The state was largely positive and productive in helping Chippenham with Four Avenues’ establishment, even though the legislative framework of the Education Act 1964 placed restrictions on the organisational form the school could take. However, by the end of 1982, the government decided to discontinue Four Avenues. This section discusses what it was about the relationship between the state, the Minister of Education and Four Avenues from 1975 to 1982 that contributed to the government’s decision to close Four Avenues.

## **Election defeat of the Third Labour Government**

The Third Labour Government and its Minister of Education, Phil Amos had a critical role in establishing Four Avenues. Yet seven months after the school opening in 1975, Labour suffered what was up until that time the biggest defeat in New Zealand electoral history. When elected in 1972, the Third Labour Government enjoyed widespread popularity and support from the New Zealand public, largely because of its charismatic Prime Minister Norman Kirk. The Labour Party, however, was unable to sustain this popularity in its three-year term. Norman Kirk died in 1974 and was replaced as Prime Minister by Wallace (Bill) Rowling, a leader many perceived as too timid to be an effective Prime Minister. During the Third Labour Government's term in office, New Zealand was also severely hit by an economic downturn. The New Zealand economy contracted and Labour ran large internal deficits in what proved to be a vain attempt to sustain the economy and its own political fortunes (Easton, 1997: 130-31).

Robert Muldoon and the National Party were elected on the promise to preserve the "New Zealand way of life" in the face of this immanent economic threat (Denoon, Mein-Smith and Wyndham, 2000: 411). Muldoon's philosophy was encapsulated in the boast, "For my part I look back to Britain," and his ambition was to "leave New Zealand no worse than he found it" (Denoon et al, 2000: 411). He was one of the first New Zealand politicians to use the medium of television effectively. With a pointer and an array of graphs and charts, he persuasively took the message into living rooms that Labour had mismanaged the New Zealand economy. Muldoon's election strategy appealed to people of his own generation who had endured the Depression and World War II and had been a part of the economic prosperity and stability of the 1950s and 1960s. Social security was the inalienable right of every New Zealander. This message of Muldoon appealed to those who were anxious about New Zealand's economic and social fortunes under Labour and wanted a return to the economic "golden weather" before 1967, after which the price of wool—one of New Zealand's major export commodities—collapsed (Easton, 1997: 74). Yet, how to fund generous levels of this "inalienable right" in the context of declining economic performance was one of the issues National had to contend with in its three terms as government from 1975 to 1984 (Denoon, 2000: 411).

The National Superannuation Scheme was the foundation of the National Party's promise to create "New Zealand the way you want it" (Denoon et al, 2000: 412). It provided a generous pension to everyone over 60 years old, replacing the income-related compulsory scheme

introduced by Labour in 1974. Muldoon's cohort—the Depression generation—were the immediate benefactors, but the scheme was affordable only with high levels of inflation (Denoon et al, 2000: 412). By 1980, superannuation comprised two thirds of the social welfare budget (Denoon et al, 2000: 412).

### **Funding the Welfare State**

The issue of long term funding of New Zealand's welfare state in the context of changing economic circumstances was addressed in *New Zealand at the Turning Point*, a report written by a taskforce established by Brian Talboys, National's Minister of Development in 1976 (Task Force on Economic and Social Planning, 1976). The report recommended creating the New Zealand Planning Council. It expressed "general disquiet about many aspects of our national economic and social life" and the "general feeling that it would be easier to reverse adverse trends if governments were willing to take a longer view in their programmes, and if there could be greater communication among different groups" (Task Force on Economic and Social Planning, 1976: ix). The recommendation to establish the New Zealand Planning Council was implemented by the Third National Government in 1976 and the Council lasted until it was abolished by the government in 1991.

### **Funding New Zealand Education**

In 1979, the New Zealand Planning Council (1979) produced a report on the future of the welfare state that was to affect the shape of the government's educational policy from the late 1970s onwards. The report expressed concern over the combination of an ageing population—that would be entitled to a generous National Superannuation Scheme—and low economic growth on public sector spending. It argued New Zealand governments in the future would have to diminish levels of public spending and prioritise the allocation of resources. In relation to education, it pointed out primary school rolls had declined from a peak of 525,323 in 1975 to 518,060 in 1978, checking the dramatic expansion of the primary school sector after the World War II (New Zealand Planning Council, 1979: 52). This fall would eventually work its way up through the secondary and tertiary sectors in succeeding years, having consequences for resource allocation (New Zealand Planning Council, 1979: 53). Net government expenditure on education had risen more rapidly than gross domestic product,

increasing from 2.5 percent of total GDP from 1950-55 to 5.2 percent in 1977 (New Zealand Planning Council, 1979: 49). An absence of change in government policy, it argued, would therefore create a surplus of resources as declining numbers of children worked their way up through the education system in the next two decades.

To a government guaranteeing high levels of social security, yet conscious of an ageing population and in command of an economy that was deteriorating, arguments like this had a certain attraction. For it could justify a reduction of spending on schooling—and even sell off property and buildings owned by the Department of Education—claiming this cost cutting would not adversely disturb students, since projections showed existing institutions and resources would more than adequately cater for them.

The Department of Education used this kind of argument in justifying its decision to close Four Avenues. The New Zealand Planning Council (1979) argued an excess of resources would be initially experienced in primary schools right across New Zealand. Christchurch, however, was distinctive in that facilities and accommodation in high schools already exceeded actual and projected levels of student enrolment (Regional Superintendent of Secondary Education, 1982: 1). The Department thus maintained closing Four Avenues would not disadvantage the students who attended it. For there would still be, the Department claimed, sufficient resources in other local high schools to absorb those who would be displaced.

### ***Targeting Four Avenues***

Cost cutting was only one reason for the Department's decision to close Four Avenues. Just as significant was the development of a more critical position in relation to progressive education on the part of the government and the Minister of Education. National saw the establishment of alternative programmes such as Four Avenues and Auckland Metropolitan College as symptomatic of Labour's preoccupation with "fads and thrills [in education] that like any fashion tantalise temporarily, but finally have no substance" (Wellington, 1985: 47). This perception, however, crystallised over time, that is, in relation to particular events and circumstances, and it became dominant when Merv Wellington became Minister of Education in 1978. Under Les Gandar, the Minister of Education from 1975 to 1978, Marian Hobbs

points out Four Avenues was allowed to continue and the change from the Third Labour Government to the Third National Government did not really bother the school's operations:

Paul: Did you find that when the Government of Muldoon came into power that that affected Four Avenues.

Marian: It made no difference by that time. By that time we were established (interview, 21 August 2002).

Merv Wellington (1985) criticised his predecessor for being indecisive when it came to dealing with the legacy of Phil Amos. "It seemed he [Gandar] had postponed making necessary decisions by establishing an interminable number of review groups and committees" (Wellington, 1985: 22). Thus, perhaps a reason Four Avenues faced little threat to its existence during the first term of the Third National Government was because of what Wellington identifies as Gandar's tendency to postpone "making necessary decisions." Although the way Gandar acted as Minister of Education often proved beneficial to Four Avenues, the way he acted was not always to the school's advantage. For example, when the problem of an expiring Department of Education lease on the school's Gloucester Street site came to Gandar's attention late in 1978, he responded by asking the officers of his Department "for a full report on the implications both educationally and administratively of this change from the original ["school without walls"] concept" (Minister of Education, 1978). To parents and coordinators at Four Avenues, this Ministerial response failed to address the urgent problem of accommodation for the school in the 1979 academic year (Four Avenues, 1978b).

### **The Johnson Report**

A more critical stance in relation to Phil Amos' legacy as Minister of Education became more noticeable on the part of the government when the controversial "Johnson Report" (Johnson, 1978) by the Health and Social Education Committee was released in 1978. This position was not only shaped by the political and social conservatism of Cabinet members like Merv Wellington, but also by the strong public reaction the release of the Johnson Report provoked. For schools to teach things like physical education and social studies, the report argued, inevitably meant that they had to communicate *moral and spiritual values* to children. This claim, along with Amos' terms of reference for the whole Committee, caused considerable

concern on the part of certain groups. Groups such as the Concerned Parents Association queried whether schools were the proper forum for “moral, spiritual and values education” (Johnson, 1978: 32).

To dispel this concern, Les Gandar refined the Committee’s terms of reference when he became Minister of Education to “promoting sound family relationships, effective work, responsible citizenship, cultural enjoyment and adaptability to change” (Johnson, 1978). Many still felt, however, that the existence of a Health and Social Education Committee signified the encroachment of “liberals and radicals” into areas they saw as the proper responsibility of parents and private community organisations. There was also concern that syllabuses in “health and social education,” especially when they replaced existing subjects, would detract from the “three Rs” [sic] of reading, writing and arithmetic (Johnson, 1978: 32).

### **“Getting Back to Basics”**

Merv Wellington, Les Gandar’s successor as Minister of Education from 1978 to 1984, was sympathetic to this last concern. He saw the Johnson Report as unbalanced and overly pessimistic. In his view, it expressed an important debate about the future of New Zealand Education in the wrong terms. It focused on things like “human development studies” and discussed schools as institutions that meet the developmental and social needs of children while ignoring the problem of the information, knowledge and skills he believed needed to be taught in the classroom to help young people cope in the workplace (Wellington, 1985: 73).

Wellington emphasised a “no frills” approach to education and the curriculum, based around the intensive teaching of English, mathematics and science in secondary schools. In 1982, he formed a committee around “getting back to basics,” which he hoped would devise a proposal for prescribing the syllabus for all schools and the amount of time that was to be devoted to instruction in each. Wellington’s concern with “getting back to basics” and proscribing a core curriculum reflected an anxiety on the part of many people in New Zealand in the late 1970s and early 1980s over a perceived decline in academic standards in comparison with the past. “Employers and many parents [were] either bewildered or exasperated by what they saw as a shortage of acceptable skills among young job seekers” (Wellington, 1985: 58). Anxieties over falling academic standards in schools reflected broader debates among conservative politicians and thinkers in many countries about the “baleful” effects of 1960s “academic

radicalism” (for example, Bloom, 1987). This had created a cohort of teachers Wellington argued, “Who ... [were] determined to change the shape of formal schooling in this country” (Wellington, 1985: 77). Wellington dismissed this cohort as “teacher activists,” accusing them of using their position within the school to “preach personal views on subjects such as South Africa, Israel and the PLO, abortion feminism and the nuclear question” (Wellington, 1985: 77).

In the early 1980s, Four Avenues had a reputation for the kind of “teacher activism” Wellington criticised. During the 1981 South African Rugby Team tour, some students from Four Avenues joined in local protests over the tour. During school hours, speakers were also invited from organisations such as HART (“Halt All Racist Tours”) and “The Women’s Movement” to address interested students (see Figure 3). Most of these talks may have happened out of student interest rather than because of any deliberate “activism” on the part of coordinators, as can be seen by the fact other speakers included public health nurses and magistrates. Nevertheless, Four Avenues was seen as epitomising in the early 1980s the kind of “teacher activism” Wellington condemned, even if that reputation was not fully justified.



WELLINGTON 20 PONG WELLINGTON

TELEPHONE 226

## FOUR AVENUES

P.O. Box 568  
Phone 64 644

15/21 Gloucester St  
Christchurch 1

### FAMILY EVENING

Wednesday 8 October

Starting with a HANZI from 5.30pm onwards  
\$1.00 per Adult 50c Children

Co-ordinators will be in their Home Group rooms from 7pm  
Cartoons will be shown in the Den

### GIANT BRING AND BUY AND JUMPER SALE

Pauls Group will be running a bring and buy to raise money  
for their Stewart Island trip.  
Things will be on sale Wednesday 8 October, during the day  
and at the Den in the evening.  
Bring or sell, or ask us to collect things before Wednesday  
if possible.  
If you aren't bring them before Wednesday bring them with  
you when you come to the Den.  
Everything will be cheap, so clear out your cupboards and  
make room for your bargains.

### SPEAKERS

Speakers arranged for this month:-

8 October The Women's Movement plus C.O.R.  
15 October S.I.R.I.  
22 October Harold Evans, retired magistrate  
29 October Jo Johnson, Public Health Nurse

Come along and hear them, remember the time 10.30am.

### CRAFT WORKSHOP

Every Monday afternoon we try to share ideas and experience  
with the students and all parents and friends who are  
interested in improving their abilities in various crafts.  
We don't pretend to be experts. The idea is to try some-  
thing new together. If you can give advice or would like  
to learn - come along.

Some of the possibilities are:-

Knit Toit Toy making Basketmaking Tie dying  
Macramé Crocheting Candle making

We hope that some of the articles made will be on sale at  
THE CRAFT MARKET, which is open until on Wednesday.

### SPACE - RELAXATION DAY

The school will be closed to students on Friday 24 October.

Figure 3 Copy of a newsletter from Four Avenues, circa 1980. Sourced from the personal papers of Shirley Croll.

In terms of curriculum, teaching staff at Four Avenues also had a different—or at least were *seen* to have a different—position from that of the Minister of Education. This position was

presented in *The Press* (Anonymous, 1981a) in an article on Graham Mundy becoming Director of Four Avenues in 1981. The author of this piece claimed Four Avenues had “no set curriculum” and that students had “as much say” in the school’s running as staff, and that students were the ones who decided what they wanted to learn (Anonymous, 1981a: 11). The Minister of Education’s concern with enforcing instruction in a core curriculum was too closely aligned with the interests of politicians and employers, Mundy argued, and ignored the concerns of students. In a time of high unemployment, like the early 1980s, an excessive focus on curriculum content diverted attention away from the fact that the experience of many young people after school would be unemployment, regardless of what they were taught. Targeting the curriculum was a way of diverting attention away from the fact that youth unemployment was a structural issue in the New Zealand economy and that the demand for jobs outweighed the available supply. As Graham Mundy put it:

Schools are being used to force this “con” along by trying to educate for the work force and careers when they know well that many children will be unemployed when they leave school (Anonymous, 1981a: 11).

To Merv Wellington arguments like this reflected “Left wing points of view ... of an extremist type” and “the radicalism that pervaded the academic world in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s” (Wellington, 1985: 31). Claims like this encouraged permissive teaching that rendered pupils ineffective to survive in the “real world” once they left school.<sup>29</sup> As Minister of Education, Wellington tried to neutralise the growing influence of “Left wing points of view” in the education system and return it to what he envisaged as an ideal state (compare Wellington, 1985: chapter 5). He justified these efforts as Minister in terms of the “interests of all pupils” and the interests of a “silent majority” of taxpayers, parents, principals and teachers (Wellington, 1985: 60).

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<sup>29</sup>Interestingly, this is Illich’s (1975: 145-46) criticism of A. S. Neill’s Summerhill and the numerous “free schools” in the United States that modelled themselves on his pedagogical theories.

## ***Closing Four Avenues***

The Department of Education's reasons for closing Four Avenues also need to be related to what happened within the school (so to speak) from 1975 to 1982. For what happened within Four Avenues was just as influential in the Department's decision as the government's concerns over the future viability of social security in New Zealand and Merv Wellington's attitude towards educational "liberals." The following section shows how the Department's decision to close Four Avenues was influenced by three developments at Four Avenues itself.

### **Four Avenues in a Residential Area**

Although seemingly trivial, the first development was to do with the complaints the Department of Education and the Christchurch City Council received about the behaviour of Four Avenues' students. The site Four Avenues received in 1975 was part of a zoned residential area in Christchurch and neighbours often complained of disruptive and "menacing" behaviour within its vicinity. While most students seemed to have been generally "well behaved," the behaviour of others made the reputation of Four Avenues somewhat precarious in the community. As Walter Logeman says:

We [Four Avenues] did have to make sure that we weren't seen as too much of a menace in the community. And that was a bit of a concern with some kids. With most of the kids, it wasn't a concern. Just even neighbours hearing bunches of noisy kids walking down the street. It was a bit scary, because they all had long hair and they swore [pause]. And later on, they became punk. And that was really where they started to look more and more bizarre. And that wasn't right at the beginning. It was after I left. After 19? [Pause]. I left in 1978. It must have been 1979 or 1980. I don't know when punk rock came in (interview, 20 May 2002).

Among the Department's stated considerations when it came to closing Four Avenues was the suitability of having a secondary schooling programme in a highly built up residential area. When the Department provided Four Avenues with an operations base in 1975, its concerns at this point were minimal, as the building provided was intended only as "an administrative home base and a room to meet socially" (Regional Superintendent of Education, 1978).

Within months of opening, however, Four Avenues began to take on some of the trappings of a mainstream state high school—classrooms, timetables, and coordinators and students assembling and staying in a specific building all day. Rather than going out into the community, as Four Avenues original philosophy assumed, students “preferred to stay around the house [the school’s centre] a lot” (Walter Logeman, interview, 20 May 2002) Along with causing concern on the part of the Department about Four Avenues’ suitability in a zoned residential area, this development also bothered the Department in terms of ongoing funding of Four Avenues. What troubled the Department was not so much this development, but that it created what the Department perceived as a piecemeal approach to planning and a request-on-demand attitude when it came to continued funding of the Four Avenues programme. As John Clough puts it:

The Department of Education had never bargained for a building and it had been faced with a continual barrage of complaints about the building, applications for more buildings and resources and that hadn’t been part of the original set up. And that was never resolved. If I had one single biggest headache in my time there, that was it. That’s what I was faced with, trying to resolve that issue with the Department. It was created by the fact that the school was set up on a different premise (interview, 28 August 2002).

Four Avenues practically could do little long-term planning on the basis of projected enrolments. A high student turnover in the late 1970s and early 1980s contributed to this. Four Avenues increasingly attracted adolescents who were having difficulties in other Christchurch secondary schools rather than those who were attending Four Avenues for cogent educational reasons (Regional Superintendent of Education, 1982: 1). Local high school principals regularly contacted Four Avenues, asking its Director John Clough to take in a student who they were having trouble with. Yet he insisted Four Avenues was not a centre for adolescents other high schools deemed troublesome, but a place students wanted to attend for genuine educational reasons. As Arthur (1980) put it in a newspaper feature on the school:

Four Avenues has to take care that other schools do not foist their rotten apples [sic] on to it. Principals are always ringing to ask if the school will take some misfit or troublemaker [sic], but John Clough firmly declines. That is not what Four Avenues is for. Students have to genuinely want an alternative school, and that is the main consideration when applicants are interviewed (15).

Four Avenues and John Clough made many exceptions to this “consideration.” It was neither rigidly enforced nor applied as a criterion for entry. Coordinators at Four Avenues characteristically showed “tremendous compassion” for many of the students other schools considered troublesome, believing that they were so labelled for what were trivial problems (John Clough, interview, 28 August 2002). During his interview, John Clough expresses disagreement with the way many people in Christchurch consistently used terms like “rotten apples,” “misfits” and “troublemakers” to describe many of Four Avenues' students:

If I have any major arguments with the publicity of the day, it was that those kids were often described as “dropouts.” But to me that is quite wrong. The young people at Four Avenues were not “dropouts.” They wanted to be at school; they just didn’t want to be at the school they had been at [laughter]! They all wanted to make a go of it in some way or another; some would take longer than others, and some had to get it out of their systems which meant that they had to be in a safe, secure place. But they certainly weren’t “dropping out” of the system (interview, 28 August 2002).

Coordinators at Four Avenues did not see many of the students at Four Avenues as “failures” in the secondary schooling system. Rather they believed that many of the high schools that Four Avenues’ students had come from had failed to adequately meet or satisfy adolescent needs. Four Avenues took in many of its students, because in its more informal and easygoing environment coordinators believed students would have the space to work on their problems and eventually comes to terms with the demands of learning. Philosophically, most of them had a belief in the inherent motivation of the child to learn and held that the mechanisms of discipline in mainstream secondary schools were psychologically harmful and repressive. Although many students tested this faith, and some members and parents argued the school should not *as a matter of principle* accept students other schools considered “rotten apples,” the development of many so-called misfits and troublemakers at Four Avenues suggested to coordinators it was well founded.

## **Change in Philosophy**

The Department of Education's second reason for closing Four Avenues was that Four Avenues "abandoned" its original philosophy and adopted a more formally academic programme (Regional Superintendent of Education, 1978). Terms such as "abandoned" was how the Department regularly described this shift. To the Department's Southern Regional Office Superintendent of Education (1978), it made the whole legitimacy of Four Avenues questionable:

The original paper for the establishment of this school called only for an administrative home base and a room to meet socially. Changes in the operation of the school now appear to have taken place and the idea of a "school without walls" appears to have been abandoned in favour of a more structural and formally taught programme. Such a programme appears to need as much or possibly more accommodation than the entitlement for an equal number of children in a normal secondary school. Before I am prepared to approve major spending in this area I would need to be convinced that the operation of this school still follows the original approval or that the changed philosophy is acceptable to the Minister and cannot be operated within a normal secondary school. This latter consideration is most important when one considers that some of the secondary schools in Christchurch now have a surplus of accommodation (1).

The person who wrote this as the Regional Superintendent was the District Senior Inspector who played a pivotal role in establishing Four Avenues in the mid 1970s. Members of Four Avenues saw such discourse as concealing and rationalising the personal antipathy he had towards the school from its inception. The issue he raised, however, was an important one for the Department of Education. The Chippenham proposal (No Date) argued that educating students at Four Avenues would be less than (or at least financially equivalent to) educating them in a mainstream secondary school. Yet the subsequent operation of Four Avenues showed that compared to a mainstream secondary school it was costing just as much, if not more, to educate a student in it. For a Department directed by the government to reduce its spending, the issue of Four Avenues' financial viability compared to other high schools was an important one.

The members of Four Avenues were themselves not beyond rationalisation when it came to justifying why Four Avenues had shifted from its original “school without walls” philosophy. Where the Department spoke of the change in terms of *abandonment*, Four Avenues articulated it in terms of *inner necessity*, using the organic imagery of *natural evolution*. As the school’s *Aims* document claimed:

Four Avenues *could not help but evolve* as a community in its own right even though this was not initially one of its main aims. Thus, it became very clear in practice that the main learning resource was not “the community” but rather people—fellow students and staff. The school as a community has become as important as the outside community (Four Avenues School, 1977, italics added).

Like Auckland Metropolitan College, Four Avenues changed in the late 1970s from a school resembling Philadelphia’s Parkway Program to one more resembling A. S. Neill’s Summerhill School, which took its cue from Rousseau’s *Emile* (Vaughan, 2001: 37). Elements which were integral but ancillary to the “school without walls” philosophy—for example, student freedom, no formal lines of authority, the freedom to smoke and dress however one wanted, little pressure to achieve academically—received greater emphasis as Four Avenues made this shift in its self-understanding. It stressed the quality of life and experience that was to be found within its own “walls” rather than in the community beyond them. To staff, students and parents, the school *as a community* became more paramount than *the outside community*” (Four Avenues School, 1977). This change was symbolised in Four Avenues dropping “school without walls” from its name and becoming “Four Avenues Alternative School” in 1977.

As a coordinator who was involved in this process of change at Four Avenues, Mellon (1978) in her Diploma of Education thesis made the issue of why Four Avenues modified its pedagogy central to her argument. She indicates how coordinators at Four Avenues drew upon psychoanalytic discourses of over-determination, and the impact of so-called unconscious mechanisms to frame this change. “It was the pressure,” she argued, “of the unconscious needs of the students that brought them [the staff] to modify their attitudes” when it came to the “school without walls” philosophy (Mellon, 1978: 15). The ideal student in the pedagogies of Bremer and von Moschzisker (1971), Illich (1973) and Freire (1970) was the “mature and self-directed” person, the one who learns by observation and experience (Mellon, 1978: 9). In these pedagogies, the task of the teacher was to enhance the

consciousness of choice in the child. To paraphrase an expression of Charles Taylor's (1989), the self was prior to any ends in these pedagogies. Yet the students who were drawn to Four Avenues were overwhelmed by this kind of choice; they were "mainly the unhappy, the deprived or the failing" (Mellon, 1978: 9). Staff therefore felt it was necessary to frame Four Avenues' pedagogy so that it more adequately addressed what they saw as the emotional and educational needs of most students. Mellon quotes an "original staff member" at Four Avenues who reflected this argument when he said:

I believe we expected too much of the students, that whereas most of what was outlined in the original prospectus could be made to apply to the few well motivated, well disciplined independent thinking students. We had, of course, few such students. The basic belief that children would be keen to spend time in the community has been shown to be partly right. Most could only bring themselves to spend a limited part of the week "out there." They needed the support of their peers. Again we expected too much of the children (Mellon, 1978: 10).

Dealing with the vast, complex community of Christchurch proved overwhelming for most students at Four Avenues, and the Parkway Program's "school without walls" model was inadequate, staff believed, in addressing the needs of most adolescents in the school. As a way of addressing this issue, therefore, coordinators conceived an understanding of Four Avenues in terms of an "extended family" or "therapeutic community" rather than invisibility "to the community and to itself" (Mellon, 1978: 9; Walter Logeman, interview, 20 May 2002). Again, drawing upon psychoanalytic categories, many coordinators at Four Avenues understood their role in terms of a "parent" or "older sibling" substitute. Marilyn, an early coordinator, described how her experience of working with many adolescents at Four Avenues necessitated this role:

Seeing students "in the round" meant that one was aware of all their needs, including emotional. In some cases students wanted to help themselves but after 14 to 16 years of bad parenthood/home life they were so emotionally unstable that they needed tremendous support to keep them channelled in one direction. The emotional involvement of caring which is inherent in the whole concept of Four Avenues is a demanding and exhausting one, which virtually has no limits. It is impossible for one person to be all things to 14 people: it is silly to try but



hard not to when so many needs are so obvious...

There were some students for whom I think I probably was an older sister substitute. This kind of relationship was very effective in regulating and changing behaviour patterns and because of this I was quite happy to be viewed in this light. The negative aspect was of course that it was often too late for such a relationship, though valuable in its own right, to have much effect.

The great and obvious difference between my role in my two years as a teacher in a state school and my two terms as a coordinator at Four Avenues is the fact that in the former situation I was first and foremost Ms Wells, teacher and purveyor of knowledge and skills whilst as Marilyn coordinator I was first friend, adviser, parent-substitute before being an instructor (Mellon, 1978b).<sup>30</sup>

The problems that necessitated the development of this kind of role on the part of coordinators was that the much vaunted virtues of learning in the community proved to be unattractive to most students who often preferred to stay within the precincts of 26 Gloucester Street, and remain thus “at school.” Furthermore, the “school without walls” philosophy presupposed that a stable family/home life (however that was constituted) would provide adolescents with the self-esteem, motivation and maturity to undertake learning in the community. For many of the students at Four Avenues, however, such a familial background/home life could not be taken-for-granted. The Parkway Program model of learning also assumed most students would have high levels of confidence, persistence, discipline and self-control when it came to applying themselves to learning. For many senior students this was demanding a lot; for most juniors, it expected too much of their capacities.

In facing this problem, Four Avenues' staff evaluated the viability of the whole idea of community-based learning. If the “school without walls” model was shown to be untenable for most students then what legitimised Four Avenues' continued existence? Staff and many parents and students faced this question. In dealing with this problem, Four Avenues “was able to change its ideology and all that to adapt” (Walter Logeman, interview, 20 May 2002). Four Avenues “adapted” by claiming what was central to its identity was *really* the quality of life, experience and freedom it provided students, not learning in the community as such. This

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<sup>30</sup>The personal name of this teacher has been changed to protect the anonymity and the privacy of the person who gave this information in the late 1970s.

justified the continued existence of Four Avenues rather than any particular pedagogy. This argument was reflected by Graham Mundy in *The Press* (Anonymous, 1981a) when he claimed: “This school justifies its existence every time a student walks out the front gate feeling happy about the experience of learning” (11).

Although many within Four Avenues saw this kind of claim as a more than sufficient justification for its continued existence, the Department of Education was less than satisfied this was an adequate reason for continuing to fund Four Avenues. Both Auckland Metropolitan College and Four Avenues had been established as programmes modelled on Parkway in Philadelphia, but by the late 1970s both had started to take on the trappings of mainstream schooling. Learning and instruction in Auckland Metropolitan College and Four Avenues was increasingly carried on in fixed locations, that is, designated areas marked “school,” and both were offering formal School Certificate, University Entrance and Bursary Qualifications—courses of study that they were never established to offer essentially (compare Vaughan, 2001: 40). For this reason, the Minister of Education directed the Department of Education in 1979 to undertake a formal evaluation of Four Avenues and Metropolitan College to see whether they had been relatively successful, and whether they justified continued resources and funding.

The evaluation (Department of Education, 1979) of both schools noted Four Avenues was “closer to the ‘school without walls’ concept than Auckland Metropolitan College” (2). Four Avenues had quickly moved from this concept after becoming established in 1975, but the Director [John Clough] was making efforts to shift the school back to this concept, so that it would represent a “real alternative” (Department of Education, 1979: 2). Nevertheless, the evaluation team claimed John Clough was fighting “a brave and lonely battle in trying to articulate objectives for Four Avenues” (Department of Education, 1979: 2). When it came to learning, the report argued members of Four Avenues characteristically understood the alternativeness of their school in terms of what it *did not* represent rather than what it positively represented (Department of Education, 1979: 3). “The negative sense of an *avoidance* rather than an *alternative education philosophy* underlies many of the unit’s problems” (Department of Education, 1979: 3, emphasis original).

The problems identified included: 1) “poor motivation and desultory work patterns in most students, 2) poorly planned programmes of study, and 3) “inadequate records on students and evaluation procedures” (Department of Education, 1979: 4). These difficulties, the report

claimed, were intensified and perpetuated by a “*laissez faire* environment” and “sporadic, unbalanced” and generally inadequate programmes for most students (Department of Education, 1979: 4). The evaluation complained that what many staff valued as symbols of genuinely alternative education—no uniforms for children, allowing them to swear, smoke, address adults on a first-name basis and giving them the choice of attending or not attending class—were really peripheral to learning (Department of Education, 1979: 4). The report claimed that what this reflected was a high degree of uncertainty over what was needed at Four Avenues in terms of pedagogy (Department of Education, 1979: 4). In spite of these criticisms, the evaluation recommended Four Avenues should remain open and that more attention to what was *really alternative* or *distinctive* in the school's way of learning would make it a viable and worthwhile programme (Department of Education, 1979: 4). The report praised the quality of Four Avenues’ communal life and argued this was something that should be reflected in “all schools” (Department of Education, 1979: 4). Yet even with these notes of praise, the criticisms directed at Four Avenues suggested to many within Four Avenues that its continued operation as far as the state was concerned was still an open issue (Department of Education, 1979: 2). The uncertainty over Four Avenues’ long-term future on the Department’s part was only intensified by the fact that Four Avenues itself was confused about its own goals and reasons for existing.

### **Change in Programme**

The Department’s third reason for closing Four Avenues was the school's programmes increasingly resembled those of mainstream secondary schools. As Graham Mundy puts it, the Department believed Four Avenues “was duplicating services already existing and there was no strong reason for its existence” (interview, 9 October 2002). A reading of the Chippenham proposal (No Date) document shows an integral part of the rationale for Four Avenues was that it *would not* duplicate the programmes and courses done in other secondary schools. The proposal maintained “formal certificates” and “state examinations” would not be emphasised (Chippenham Community Education Committee, No Date). Students who wanted a full School Certificate or University Entrance course would leave Four Avenues and go to institutions that would formally prepare them for sitting the required examinations. This was to avoid duplicating what other secondary schools offered and a way of emphasising (like Illich, 1973) that examinations were a small and not particularly significant part of “real education.” However, coordinators at Four Avenues found that students, when given the

opportunity to devise their own courses, usually devised courses consisting of the conventional School Certificate and University Entrance curricula (Four Avenues School, 1977). This is something Vaughan (2001) also noted in her study of Auckland Metropolitan College: “Students [in the late 1970s] exercised their democratic right to demand traditional school organisation in terms of teacher-led activities that were not necessarily compatible with [philosophies of] community involvement” (40). Like Metropolitan College, many students at Four Avenues wanted a more formally academic curriculum and teacher-led classroom activities.

Some coordinators at Four Avenues understood the emphasis on traditional academic subjects in the courses selected by many students as a “hangover” from years of exposure to conventional schooling. Hence, the provision of them at Four Avenues was an interim measure until community-based learning programmes could be devised and found (Four Avenues School, 1977). Others felt the emphasis on School Certificate in alternative schools demonstrated how learning was synonymous with formal schooling for many people. Thus, John Clough says:

So I very quickly realised the depth of the problem we were going to face. And also, the entrenched attitudes of New Zealand adults to things like School Cert. It was a ritual or a myth of school which is so deeply embedded in the psyche that it is very difficult to overthrow (interview, 28 August 2002).

Studies since Ivar Berg’s *Education and Jobs* (1970) have shown there is often a lack of correspondence between educational accomplishment and occupational attainment or success. Four Avenues, however, was still an established part of the New Zealand state education system. Aside from the issue of whether qualifications like School Certificate were *really valuable* in the 1970s in terms occupational success or not, in terms of the education system—of which Four Avenues was a part—they were highly esteemed and seen by those within it (for example, educational professionals, teachers, parents, students and employers) as valuable and thus as worth pursuing. When Chippenham proposed an informal, “school without walls” method of education, formal qualifications, such as School Certificate, University Entrance and Bursary, were becoming increasingly sought after as New Zealand’s economic performance deteriorated and the demand decreased for unskilled work. As a result, teenagers in larger numbers in the 1970s began to stay on longer in secondary school to gain formal qualifications. The Department of Education’s Regional Superintendent for Education made

this point when he said:

Pupils leaving school after form five now had two options: to be unemployed or to get more qualifications. Because of the shortage of jobs pupils expectations of themselves had risen (Education Reporter, 1980: 3).

Four Avenues thus moved to a more formally academic programme and range of courses because the informal “school without walls” kind of education it was established to provide was *untimely* in terms of what most teenagers and their parents sought from secondary education. John Clough suggests this when he claims:

I think they very quickly did start classes on the site and it became like a school. That was obviously what the Christchurch population wanted or some variation of that. What the kids were really kicking against was they saw as the heavy regulatory regime of most of the other high schools of the time (interview, 28 August 2002).

As the Chippenham Education Committee (No date), the Educational Development Conference and many progressive educators were questioning the value and relevance of formal schooling qualifications, these very qualifications were ironically becoming more valued and coveted by students as they sought to avoid the prospect of unemployment and/or low paying work after leaving (Shearer, 2002). This trend reflected in the New Zealand context what sociologists like Touraine (1971) and Bell (1973) identified as the emergence of a “post-industrial society” in Western nations, where goods production and manufacturing were declining as a form of economic activity and being replaced by knowledge and service-based industries. It also reflected, as Berger and Berger (1976) and Sennett (1973) pointed out, that young people were increasingly required in the 1970s to possess formal schooling and technical qualifications as a prerequisite to working in industries and occupations which only a generation before did not require them. Four Avenues’ original emphasis on the value of informal experiences and learning in the community was thus somewhat out of touch with the increasing value that was beginning to be placed on formal qualifications and the necessity of acquiring them in the 1970s for a whole range of occupations.

When it came to the provision of a more academic curriculum, the Department of Education was highly critical of Four Avenues because it claimed the school duplicated courses being

done in other schools and that Four Avenues poorly performed in doing that. The Department of Education's (1979) report on Auckland Metropolitan College and Four Avenues was particularly trenchant:

What we found discouraging was that the work was being covered in the dullest of ways. The excessive use of task sheets and the summarising of textbooks does not enthuse many students these days. The argument of Four Avenues teachers and parents that bookish learning in ordinary schools turns kids off is made a mockery of by the lack of practical work and visual material offered at Four Avenues (11).

In making these criticisms, the report argued these deficiencies were "not entirely of Four Avenues' own making," and that they were exacerbated by the "professional isolation" that staff felt in working at Four Avenues (Department of Education, 1979: 11). Staff at Four Avenues were reluctant to call on the Department of Education's inspectors and/or subject advisers because they believed the Department had little sympathy for their school's philosophy and what it was trying to achieve, seeing Four Avenues as an embarrassing anomaly in the education system rather than a worthwhile programme which needed encouragement and development (Mellon, 1978: 57). The report directly singled out the Department of Education for reproach here: "Having agreed to establish Four Avenues, the Department of Education has not been involved enough in the formulation of goals, nor in decisions about the change of direction or why. We believe that all parties, the Department, the Hagley Board, staff, students and parents should be involved in trying to establish what is really alternative about the school" (Department of Education, 1979: 4). Implied in this reproach was the assessment that parties *outside but involved* with Four Avenues were in a sense just as culpable as Four Avenues for the shortcomings of its programme.

In their evaluation of what factors contributed to the success or failure of an alternative learning programme, the report argued supportive evaluation by educational authorities was an important part of any alternative school's success (Department of Education, 1979: 11). It provided a degree of outside credibility and affirmation to those involved in an alternative programme and enabled them to more accurately assess the value of what worked and did not work in terms of pedagogic strategies. The 1979 report on Four Avenues and Auckland Metropolitan College suggested the Department of Education had failed to adequately review Four Avenues from the start, and that the Department's generally negative attitude towards the

school had only served to reinforce a defensive posture on Four Avenues' part when it came to any kind of criticism.

These three developments within Four Avenues are important in understanding the Department's reasons for closing Four Avenues in early 1980s. The politics of state education in the early 1980s was certainly an important influence in the government's decision to end Four Avenues. Yet this decision was also conditioned by the perception the state was not getting value for money in terms of its investment of time and resources with Four Avenues.

### ***Resisting Closure***

With changes in the political situation and the education system in which it was embedded, Four Avenues' fate seemed inevitable. Like other schemes of the Third Labour Government—for example, *Ohus* and the compulsory superannuation scheme—the Minister of Education was determined Four Avenues would be another oddity from the political context of the mid-1970s that would be discontinued by his government. Yet Four Avenues survived. What follows discusses how Four Avenues managed to remain in place in the state education system, and how its efforts to resist extinction combined with the interventions of other actors.

#### **Local Media**

On the 26 January 1983, Graham Mundy, Four Avenues' Director, Jean Herbison, the Hagley High School Board representative and Roger Gabb, a parent representative met the Minister of Education in Wellington to try to convince him not to close Four Avenues (Anonymous, 1983a: 6). *The Press*' reportage of the meeting the next day suggests the meeting went somewhat amicably and the article ended by saying: "Mr Wellington confirmed ... that no decision to close the school had yet been made" (Anonymous, 1983b: 4). When presented with *The Press*' coverage of this event during his interview, Graham Mundy claims the Minister had already made up his mind and was merely paying "lip service" to the consultation process:

Paul: So his statement in the paper that he was taking points raised into consideration...

Graham: I feel it was just lip service. It was going through the motions to show that he'd had proper consultation (interview, 9 October 2002).

From Graham's interview, a description of the meeting emerges between the delegates from Four Avenues and the Minister that indicates the meeting was not as amicable as *The Press* portrayed. As Graham says in response to the following question:

Paul: Now you were part of a delegation from the school that went to Wellington to meet Wellington (no pun intended [laughter]). Now how did that meeting go?

Graham: Terrible. It was Merv Wellington at the time as the Minister and Jean Herbison and I and one of the parents. And we went up there. I don't know why he said he'd see us, because he wasn't willing to discuss or listen to us in any way at all. He'd already made up his mind and that was it. So in the end what it came down to because he couldn't rationally answer our objections. It became a bit of an *ad hominem* argument against the person and he really was rude to Dame Jean Herbison, who suggested because she was well-known in educational circles. And he said something to the effect you've been in my office several times about this and the other thing, as much as to say "you're just a pain in the neck." And she was very offended about this. I felt very offended, because she had put a lot of time into education and she had very strong educational ideals and he was trying to trivialise what she was there for; her motivation for being there if you like, which wasn't the case at all. So it ended on rather a sour note and two of us left. She asked to stay and speak to Merv Wellington privately and she sort of took him on about this and they had quite strong words to that effect. There was no way that guy was going to bend (interview, 9 October 2002).

The description Graham provides of this meeting and Merv Wellington's attitude is consistent with the way Wellington and the Third National Government as a whole viewed the political decision-making process. In *New Zealand Education in Crisis* (1985), he claimed: "I have a deep-rooted objection to consensus politics. Consensus, in the memorable words of Margaret Thatcher, is 'the process of avoiding the very issues that have to be resolved'" (22). For Wellington, he had consulted and listened to the delegation from Four Avenues. Yet at the



same time, he believed “pressure groups” such as Four Avenues were unable “to live with NO for answer” (25, caps original). To him, this was not the same thing as saying he “had not listened to them” (Wellington, 1985: 25). In making any political decision, he held there would always be opposition and discontented people. The point was to just make the decision and move on. This attitude on his part was reflected in the words of former Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies when he faced criticisms for his political decisions: “The dogs bark but the caravan moves on” (Wellington, 1985: 23).

Four Avenues, and those who supported it, would not “live with NO for answer.” To them, the Minister and the Department were sacrificing educational ends for saving what was a relatively insignificant amount of money. “No sound *educational reasons* have been put forward for its closure,” said Jean Herbison (Anonymous, 1982: 6, emphasis added). “Higher” educational principles, in other words, were being sacrificed for “baser” economic and financial ends by the government.

*The Press*’ coverage of Four Avenues impending closure in 1983 shows how Four Avenues conveyed this message to a wider public. In letters to the editor and articles gaining Four Avenues’ “reaction” to the Department of Education’s decisions, the message was constantly conveyed that what was paramount was the intellectual and emotional nurture of the child within a supportive environment. To take one article that quotes Graham Mundy three times:

It is very sad that economic grounds have been allowed to take precedence over educational criteria ... It is very sad that the whole concept of Four Avenues will be wiped out of the New Zealand education system to save \$100,000 ... It is very sad that economics have been seen as more important than educational achievements (Anonymous, 1983b: 1).

Along with coverage like this of Four Avenues’ perspective, three editorials in *The Press* in 1983 devoted to Four Avenues’ impending closure communicated this message too. For instance, in an editorial on the “case for Four Avenues” (Anonymous, 1983g), the editor reflected the argument about educational over economic ends and developed it into a more utilitarian claim for the overall benefit of society:

Even the question of cost needs to be reconsidered in the light of the alternatives for the school’s pupils. Children who emerge from the school system without

skills or self-respect are likely to prove troublemakers for society. They may have well been troublesome focal points at another school: they will have little incentive, as adults, to change their ways. For such people, Four Avenues may have well helped the community to incalculable, but significant savings (16).

Although the members of Four Avenues quibbled over the point that their school was an environment primarily for adolescents other high schools found too troublesome, the generally positive assessment given by these editorials and the prominence they gave the school was encouraged and welcomed by members and supporters of Four Avenues in their resistance to the government's decision. Four Avenues created a formal committee early in 1983 consisting of students, parents and staff that met weekly in 1983 and 1984 to devise strategies to keep the school open and “sway public opinion in support of the school” (Anonymous, 1983e: 1). Four Avenues believed “liberal” or “progressive opinion” in Christchurch could be counted on, yet it also understood an important part of resisting the government's decision was to gain the support of local “conservative opinion” (Anonymous, 1983e: 1). The three *Press* editorials in 1983 (Anonymous, 1983f; 1983g; 1983j) helped Four Avenues here. As the following and above excerpt show, they did this by transforming the argument about the priority of educational ends into a utilitarian “case” for the retention of Four Avenues:

When rolls are falling at other schools, expensive development for Four Avenues becomes harder to justify; yet the benefits gained by its pupils and by the schools in which they would otherwise place added strains, argue for expenditure at least in proportion to what is spent on establishing other, more conventional schools (Anonymous, 1983f: 16).

An analysis of the letters to the editor from Four Avenues' supporters and members shows some of the other arguments they drew upon and developed in legitimating Four Avenues' continued existence. One of the most prominent was Four Avenues' existence injected dynamism into the education system. “Do we want the education system to be static and become atrophied? If we want the latter we must allow varying shades of conventional and alternative schools to exist” (Rogers, 1983: 20). A second was Four Avenues had indeed remained true to the “school without walls philosophy,” despite claims to the contrary (Sutherland, 1983: 14). A third major argument used was students at Four Avenues were not as generally delinquent or troublesome as commonly supposed. They just had different

learning needs and preferences that Four Avenues catered for in the state system. With the removal of Four Avenues, these students would not have their educational needs adequately met, and thus their chances of achievement and success in education would be hindered.

What is most noticeable about this last argument is how it contrasted with the understanding of Walter and Marian Logeman in the 1970s: that Four Avenues should not just be another school in the state system, an alternative alongside the mainstream, but a catalyst for transformation and change in the entire system. This last argument, however, encouraged the perception Four Avenues wanted to avoid in the 1970s: that it was a *special*, circumscribed sphere in the education system for students other schools found a trial to teach. Four Avenues disputed this connotation publicly in 1983. However, that the school often used arguments like the last one in legitimising its existence only reinforced the perception that its role in the state system was mainly to cater for troublesome and disruptive adolescents. As a means of remaining open, members and supporters of Four Avenues thus perpetuated the argument Chippenham and Four Avenues' first Director Graham Robinson were averse to making in the 1970s: that Four Avenues was a school for disruptive students.

In the context of New Zealand education in the early 1980s, Four Avenues' argument about the priority of educational over economic ends had a lot of appeal. It reflected and developed dominant discourses in the educational system at the time, engaging the interest of educationalists and other parties when it came to Four Avenues' plight. A letter to the *Press* from Alan Wilkinson (1983), the Leader of the New Zealand Values Party, provides an example of the way in which the arguments of Four Avenues reflected concerns outside the school when it came to the direction of government policy *vis-à-vis* education:

His [the Minister of Education's] pretext that this [the closing of Four Avenues] is a sensible economic decision is laughable. Some of Four Avenues' students have already failed to cope at other schools. If any become institutionalised because of Four Avenues closing, the trivial sum saved from the educational budget this year will be lost many times over from the social welfare or health budgets in the future. I believe this decision is the product of the Minister's narrow and rigid personal opinions ... (Wilkinson, 1983: 8).

An Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (1983) review of the New Zealand education system from 1983 shows that Four Avenues' argument about the

priority of educational ends engaged and appealed to a number of actors beyond Four Avenues itself. The OECD examiners were generally complementary about the New Zealand education system, finding it comparable to what was found in other developed countries, and on most measures up to international standards. The New Zealand system benefited from a high standard of public support and teacher professionalism, and was “by and large economically run, and by no means extravagant in its demand on resources” (OECD, 1983: 12). However, the report was critical of the stress in the New Zealand education system on individual development and the priority accorded to pure “educational, as distinct from economic and instrumental values” (OECD, 1983: 25). The review claimed “many practitioners resist discussions of their work in what they call ‘money terms’”:

Suggestions that the New Zealand economy might benefit from the introduction into the education system of a stronger element of competition, of criteria for the distribution of resources calculated to raise economic growth or an attempt to discriminate in favour of individuals and groups most likely to contribute to economic well-being, are seen by some people as antagonistic to the core values of education provision in New Zealand (OECD, 1983: 27).

In the early 1980s, educators were resistant to the government's objective that educational ends should be closely coupled with economic planning, and that they should be shaped by the latter. The insistence on this objective as an integral part of government policy was one of the main causes of Merv Wellington's unpopularity as Minister of Education, especially among educational professionals. To educators, his insistence on this objective was a politicised viewpoint that reflected his “narrow and rigid personal opinions” rather than something that deserved serious consideration (Wilkinson, 1983: 18). In pushing for education to be more determined by economic objectives, Merv Wellington was going against two decades of thinking and policy in the New Zealand education system, which had been formulated during New Zealand's post-war period of full unemployment and economic prosperity. This outlook was evident in the Currie Commission report (New Zealand Commission on Education, 1962), where only one and a half of its 886 pages were devoted to the relationship between education and the economy. The dominance of discourses in the education system that esteemed educational values, and derided economic and instrumental values as somehow inferior, helps us to appreciate, therefore, why the members and supporters of Four Avenues repeatedly used the argument that *principle was being sacrificed to cost-cutting* in closing Four Avenues. In this context, such an argument was developed

because it was used extensively by other actors in the education sector when denouncing government policy.

### **Hagley High School**

Hagley High School had an important role in Four Avenues remaining open. As the last chapter showed, the Hagley Board of Governors were reluctant to become associated with the Four Avenues programme in the mid-1970s and the Department of Education's (1979) report on alternative schools in New Zealand mildly criticised Hagley for its lack of involvement with Four Avenues. However, by the early 1980s, the relationship between Four Avenues and the Hagley Board had changed. By this time, a Board more sympathetic to the philosophy of Four Avenues was in place and Hagley High School had also been targeted by the Department of Education for potential closure in an effort to save money. Neil McLeod, a former staff member of Four Avenues expresses the grievance many in Hagley and Four Avenues felt towards the Minister and Department of Education:

We heard years later that Merv Wellington had told Cabinet that, because of an expected fall in rolls, he would close a Christchurch high school. He didn't dare attack those in wealthy suburbs where National might lose votes. He told inner city, working class Hagley High that he would close it down unless they enrolled 100 third formers for the next year, knowing that was an impossible target. The staff and parents of the Hagley community pulled out all stops and enrolled over 130 kids (interview, 22 September, 2002).

To avoid closure, Hagley High School did away with its traditional high schooling zone, which overlapped with that of the more popular Cashmere High School, and created a citywide zone for enrolments. To attract senior students dissatisfied with their experiences of high schooling, Hagley also devised programmes that linked community participation, work experience and learning in the community closer together. These steps ensured the survival of Hagley, but they had the effect of placing Four Avenues in the firing line because the Department of Education argued Four Avenues was replicating what Hagley was doing.

Although Four Avenues was for all intents and purposes an independent programme, it was still legally an attached unit and department of Hagley High School. It was this "attached unit" status to Hagley and its Board that was to prove invaluable for Four Avenues in its

efforts to remain open. The Minister of Education discovered this when legal advisers from the Post-Primary Teachers' Association pointed out that under the relevant sections of the Education Act 1964, the Minister was given the power to close *secondary schools* (Parliamentary Reporter, 1983: 4). However, Four Avenues was not legally a secondary school; it was technically a *department* of Hagley (Parliamentary Reporter, 1983: 4). As chapter 4 showed, controlling authority for Four Avenues was invested in the Hagley Board of Governors. Four Avenues' pupils were legally Hagley's pupils, and its staff were legally Hagley's staff. The legislation thus did not give the Minister of Education the power to close *part* of a school. The Minister and Department of Education were forced to concede this point in recognising they could not legally speak of “the closing of Four Avenues School,” as earlier media releases had done (Anonymous, 1983h: 9). They could only speak of “discontinuing the Four Avenues experiment” (Anonymous, 1983h: 9).

Even though the Minister could not legally close Four Avenues, he had the power to withdraw the additional resources and funding Hagley was given to sustain the Four Avenues “experiment” (Anonymous, 1983h: 5). At the end of 1983, this is what the government did by selling off Four Avenues' Gloucester Street site and withdrawing the funding that was earmarked for it. Yet Hagley High School was still supportive of sustaining the separate identity of Four Avenues and continuing it in some form (Anonymous, 1983h: 9). The support Hagley provided Four Avenues, however, appears to have been not all that significant in terms of actually sustaining the school. Parents and staff at Four Avenues had to do this themselves by contributing \$25 a term in 1984 to assist with rental costs for a building (Anonymous, 1984a). A large amount of time was also devoted by staff, students and parents to fund-raising for Four Avenues, meaning the time students had for learning was affected.

Furthermore, intermingled with the support of the Hagley Board of Governors was disquiet on the part of some Hagley staff that Four Avenues' coordinators had a smaller student-to-teacher ratio than other teachers in Hagley and that this was inherently unfair. To resolve this problem, Four Avenues' staff came to an arrangement with Hagley that they would coordinate student learning in Four Avenues and teach some classes in Hagley too. Yet, this meant that students in Four Avenues often only received what remained of their coordinators' time. As Neil McLeod says:

There were grumblings from some Hagley staff that our students enjoyed a higher staff ratio than theirs so Ros worked out this scrupulous deal where we

Four Avenues teachers would continue at Four Avenues and also contribute to Hagley so that our ratios would be the same: she asked me to 'sell' the arrangement to a Hagley staff meeting. Don and our maths teacher and our Director taught some day classes there, our Art teacher, Matthew Robinson, took off to the USA for a year, and I taught Hagley's evening UE [University Entrance] English class. Our Four Avenues students made do with what was left of our time and some voluntary supervision by dedicated parents. In spite of our cramped conditions, makeshift facilities and paltry equipment, we managed educational activities for all our kids, although too much of our time was given over to fund-raising (interview, 22 September 2002).

The tension over the question of staff-student ratios and that Hagley offered Four Avenues little in terms of tangible material support, suggests the relationship between Four Avenues and Hagley was not as close as local media coverage often portrayed. In terms of what subsequently happened in the relationship between Hagley and Four Avenues, this tension over staff-student ratios was only a trivial skirmish. Yet it anticipates the argument made in the next two chapters: the relationship between Hagley and Four Avenues was relatively harmonious and functional as long as a certain degree of organisational autonomy existed between the two schools. When Hagley and Four Avenues worked together more closely, genuine discrepancies emerged and conflict seemed to follow almost as a matter of course.

### **Changing Director**

Four Avenues was able to continue because conflict between the Director and other staff members at the school was diffused by Hagley in the early 1980s. Similar to the conflict between the Director and members of Four Avenues discussed in the next chapter, Graham Mundy, Director of Four Avenues from 1980 to 1984 claims during his interview that disagreements between him and other staff members at Four Avenues developed over the direction the school was taking and the form of education it was providing. The conflict developed, he claims, because he believed Four Avenues offered little to nothing in the way of substantive education to students.

He believes a problem with Four Avenues' approach to education was "sort of that old Aristotelian idea that people will flourish if you just leave people alone—they'll want to

learn. But that didn't happen, and when it wasn't happening they [Four Avenues' staff] weren't prepared to enforce anything" (9 October, 2002, interview). Graham disagreed with the understanding of education which assumed the role of the teacher was facilitate the consciousness of choice, and that the autonomous self was prior to any ends in learning. This was the educational orthodoxy held by many at Four Avenues and Graham argues it created an environment where:

I saw many good students coming into the school; they were well motivated with good parents who wanted a good education and that sort of thing. And even for the best of students when they saw a large group of students taking it easy and not doing anything it is very hard to resist. It is very hard to work away while other people are sitting out there having a smoke (Graham Mundy, interview, 9 October 2002).

Graham believed "a rational middle point" between a "very liberal education" and "a core curriculum" was needed to deal with this issue (Graham Mundy, interview, 9 October 2002). A small amount of compulsory learning in English, mathematics and science would be structured into each student's weekly timetable, especially for junior students. The staff of Four Avenues agreed to implement this measure, he claims. However, what disturbed him was that when some students resisted this measure, a group of staff supported the students' stance rather than the one staff had collectively agreed to. "They didn't want to be in a situation where they were at odds with students; they didn't want to enforce anything in the way of discipline. I'm using 'discipline' here in a very mild sense too!" (interview, 9 October 2002). Frustrated, Graham "transferred internally" to a teaching position in Hagley High School in 1984 and was replaced by Graeme Penny as Director.

A decade later, the significance of this "switch" for Four Avenues survival in the 1980s was not lost on many at Four Avenues when a group in the school demanded the Hagley Board relocate the Director and replace her with someone "able to work under the philosophy" of Four Avenues (Parents and Staff at Four Avenues, 1993).

### **The 1984 General Election**

Four Avenues continued because of the election of the Fourth Labour Government in July



1984. In July 1983, Labour's Spokesman [sic] on Education, Russell Marshall, pledged that an elected Labour Government would fund Four Avenues and "look at the possibility of setting up similar schools in other centres" (Anonymous, 1983d: 1). Immediately after the July 1984, election, Marshall stated Four Avenues would continue in some form (Anonymous, 1984b). At the end of September 1984, a grant of \$2635 was made by the government to Four Avenues to offset some of the costs that staff and parents at Four Avenues had incurred in running their school (Anonymous, 1984c). In the 1984 Budget, delivered by the Minister of Finance Roger Douglas, Four Avenues along with the Worker's Education Association (which had its funding slashed by \$140,000 in the 1982 Budget) had its government funding fully restored (Anonymous, 1984d). Partly the reason why Russell Marshall took an interest in Four Avenues was because he personally knew Graham Mundy and Graeme Penny. Graeme Penny had been to university with Russell Marshall, and Graham Mundy had come to know him through his previous occupation as a counsellor (Neil McLeod, interview, 22 September 2002; Graham Mundy, 9 October 2002). Four Avenues' efforts, therefore, to gain political support for its resistance to the Minister of Education's decision were made easier by the fact Russell Marshall already knew actors at Four Avenues personally. However, Graham Mundy suggests Marshall's friendship with him and Graeme Penny was only a small part of the reason for why he became interested in Four Avenues:

Paul: Was that personal relationship important with Russell Marshall?

Graham: I don't know if it was. I actually knew him myself, but I don't think it was a special factor. I just think he was supportive of that type of education. He'd been a Methodist minister for a while and into social type work as ministers are. So he had that sort of leaning and support for that type of learning. So he was good for us (interview, 9 October 2002).

Four Avenues' was largely dependent for its existence on the personal interest of a Labour Minister of Education in the kind of education it provided, and the personal influence that certain members of Four Avenues had with the Minister. Four Avenues' continuing beyond 1984 was contingent on a change of government and direct intervention on the part of Russell Marshall. Without Marshall directing funding at Four Avenues once he became Minister, it is doubtful whether Hagley High School would have sustained the school.

To attribute Four Avenues' continuing solely to Russell Marshall is to overlook the context in which Four Avenues' re-establishment occurred: the 1984 election and the efforts of Labour

to win that election. The re-establishment of Four Avenues, therefore, as a fully funded state programme, was a part of Labour's strategy to gain wider electoral support. Merv Wellington (1985) cynically suggested this when he claimed of Marshall:

He has adopted the most dangerous and damaging policy of all, by agreeing with pressure group demands while in opposition and then incorporating them in manifesto policy ... The Labour Party's education policy is no more and no less than the sum total of pressure group grievances (34).

Wellington as a partisan political actor, of course, exaggerates with these words. Yet they show that Four Avenues continuing as a state school beyond 1984 was contingent on a change of government and the efforts of Labour to gain support in the months leading up to the July 1984 election. Without the intersection of Four Avenues' crisis with an election, Four Avenues would not have continued as a state-run school, and the relationship between the Department of Education, Hagley High School and Four Avenues would not have continued until 1993. It was because of the 1984 election result that Four Avenues continued beyond the tangible prospect of closure.

## ***Conclusion***

This chapter has focused on the early 1980s and discussed the first major crisis in Four Avenues' history: the decision by the Department of Education to close the school down. In doing this, it has examined how the government went from largely supporting Four Avenues to making a decision to end it in 1982. The combination of a poorly performing economy and dismal forecasts by a number of government taskforces and working committees had a role in making Four Avenues' status uncertain. Wider economic and political circumstances particularly affected the school when the argument was made that significant savings could be made by the government in the education sector because of falling school rolls. This chapter has examined how Four Avenues' fortunes in the early 1980s were largely connected with the Minister of Education's preoccupation with "no frills" and curriculum "basics" in schooling.

This chapter second considered how developments within Four Avenues led to the Department of Education's decision to close the school. Four Avenues original philosophy

proved untenable for many students and Four Avenues struggled to adjust. The school started to increasingly resemble other secondary schools in the kinds of classes it offered in the late 1970s. It was thus duplicating what other secondary schools were offering and not doing a good job at that in the Department's view. This chapter has argued Four Avenues came to resemble other schools in its courses because community-based education was not what most students and their parents wanted from secondary education. That Four Avenues was seen as competing with other schools raised the question of whether Four Avenues was indispensable for the government.

Thirdly, a discussion has been provided of Four Avenues' resistance to the Department of Education's decision to close it down. Analysing local print media coverage from 1983, this chapter has shown how Four Avenues employed arguments that had a lot of resonance in the wider education system in the early 1980s. This section has looked at the role Hagley High School had in Four Avenues' survival. Four Avenues' status as an attached unit of Hagley prevented Merv Wellington from closing Four Avenues by ministerial fiat. However, the withdrawal of government funding for Four Avenues at the end of 1983 necessitated a closer working relationship between Hagley and Four Avenues in 1984. This section has shown how closer proximity between the two schools created tension. To anticipate the discussion in the next chapter, it was when Hagley tried to formalise a closer working relationship with Four Avenues in the early 1990s that conflict developed too. In addition, this chapter has discussed the conflict between the Director and Four Avenues' staff in the early 1980s and suggested Four Avenues' survival—and ability to continue to operate functionally as a community—was dependent on the Director leaving in 1984. To anticipate the next chapter again, it was conflict between the Director and staff that led to Four Avenues becoming dysfunctional as an organisation in the early 1990s. This chapter has looked at the significance of the July 1984 election of the Fourth Labour Government for Four Avenues. Russell Marshall, as the opposition's spokesperson for education supported Four Avenues in its struggle against the government. Once he became Minister of Education in 1984, this chapter has shown how he translated his support for Four Avenues into government policy, fully restoring its funding as an independent programme in the state education system. It was Labour's support of Four Avenues that enabled Four Avenues to re-establish itself as a separate school in 1985 and continue its relationship with Hagley. The breakdown of this relationship with Hagley and the closure of Four Avenues in 1993 is the focus of the next chapter.

## New site for school



The acting director of Four Avenues School Mr. Geoffrey Penney, left, and the regional executive officer for the Department of Education, Mr. Bob Sanders, on the new school grounds at the corner of Edgware Rd and Madras Rd.

The vacant section will house a classroom, classroom to be moved from Lincoln High School. Another vacant section on the other side of the house in the background, which will provide classroom for the school will be developed in a playing field. The house and section are Crown property. The school will open with about 100 pupils on Monday, February 5.

Figure 4: *Christchurch Star* article, 30 January 1985, showing the site of Four Avenues' second building on the corner of Edgware and Madras Streets, Christchurch. Sourced from the personal papers of Graeme Penny.

## CHAPTER VI

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### *Closure*

*The democratic quality of the school's [Four Avenues'] administration provides a great strength. It takes a lot of time but it is worked at and is prized by staff and students. We believe it is something alternative, flexible and tangible. We suspect that in a crisis it is probably unworkable.*

*—Department of Education (1979: 5).*

### ***Introduction***

Chapter 6 focuses on the third turning point in Four Avenues' history: the 1993 Education Review Office audit of Four Avenues that recommended the school's closure and effectively sealed its end. Starting with a detailed analysis of the 1992 and 1993 Education Review Office audits of Four Avenues, this chapter looks at what happened in the year or so between the two audits to bring about Four Avenues' demise. In looking at what happened in between these two audits, chapter 6 shows how legislative and institutional reforms in the New Zealand compulsory education sector in the late 1980s and early 1990s altered the long-standing relationship between Four Avenues and Hagley. These reforms had the effect of making Hagley directly responsible for Four Avenues. The long-standing arrangement between Hagley and Four Avenues—Hagley having a nominal kind of responsibility for Four Avenues while Four Avenues was an independent organisation responsible for its own affairs—could no longer continue. Chapter 6 therefore argues that much of the conflict that developed between Four Avenues and Hagley in the early 1990s was because members of Four Avenues believed their school's relationship with Hagley could continue in the way it had since the mid-1970s.

Chapter 6 further looks at how the appointment of a new Director in 1990 led to conflict at Four Avenues. The new Director had a focus on providing an environment for students who were “at risk.” Other staff members at Four Avenues, however, focused on preserving what they saw as Four Avenues’ “alternative” educational ethos and they saw the Director as threatening this. Chapter 6 argues much of the conflict within Four Avenues in the early 1990s happened because people within Four Avenues believed the Director threatened all that they understood Four Avenues as standing for and embodying—participatory democracy, student freedom, informal relationships and so on.

Chapter 6 also discusses how the differences between Hagley Community College and Four Avenues were intensified in 1993 by Hagley’s intervention in the conflict at Four Avenues between the Director and other staff members. It argues the disharmony between Hagley and Four Avenues was intensified because Hagley framed the conflict between the Director and staff at Four Avenues exclusively in terms of Four Avenues’ refusal to recognise the institutional authority of the Director. Chapter 6 shows how this framing angered many in Four Avenues, leading them to express their views and fears over the Director to the media, since they believed they were not being taken seriously by Hagley.

As close to Four Avenues’ closure in November 1993 as June 1993, this chapter shows Hagley Community College believed a rapprochement between Four Avenues and its Board of Trustees was realistic. The final part of chapter 6 discusses what led Hagley to quickly abandon this hope and sever all ties with Four Avenues, citing “irreconcilable differences” as the cause (Education Review Office, 1993: 2). This chapter suggests three things were important here. First, in trying to assume a greater role in the running of Four Avenues, Hagley was frustrated that its efforts to do so were “ignored and actively thwarted” by people at Four Avenues (Principal, 1993: 7). Second, Hagley severed its ties with Four Avenues because the members of its own Board were the target of the same kind of personal invective that was aimed in Four Avenues at the Director. Thirdly, Hagley ended its relationship with Four Avenues because getting directly involved in Four Avenues proved to be a time-consuming, expensive and largely ineffectual intervention for its own Board. Trying to take control of Four Avenues, and resolve all of the problems within it, meant the Hagley Board had little time left for the affairs of Hagley Community College. Lacking therefore a school in Christchurch willing to accept attachment with Four Avenues, the Ministry of Education implemented the recommendation of Education Review Office (1993) and closed Four Avenues.

## ***Education Review Office Reports***

In 1992, the Education Review Office (1992) audited Four Avenues. The focus of this audit was on the “learning achievements of students resulting from the progress made by the school towards reaching charter goals and objectives” (Education Review Office, 1992: 3). A large amount of coverage was given to Four Avenues’ performance and standards in terms of student achievement and programme planning. Overall, the Education Review Office depicted Four Avenues favourably, observing that it “appears to achieve success in meeting the needs of students genuinely pursuing an alternative style of education” (Education Review Office, 1992: 4). Among the positive features about Four Avenues, the review noted the following:

1. Four Avenues’ democratic structure assisted students in becoming autonomous learners (Education Review Office, 1992: 6).
2. Extensive trust existed between coordinators, students and their parents (Education Review Office, 1992: 6).
3. This was encouraged by the friendly, first name basis of the relationships in the community (Education Review Office, 1992: 5).
4. Students were friendly and cooperative (Education Review Office, 1992: 5).
5. Parents commented how their children had shown increased motivation for going to school since coming to Four Avenues (Education Review Office, 1992: 5).
6. There was an emphasis in the school on working through problems in a positive way by discussion (Education Review Office, 1992: 4).

All of this contrasts with the Education Review Office (1993) Specific Compliance Audit on Four Avenues a year later. Instead of effective democratic management and high levels of trust, the Education Review Office claimed Four Avenues was managed poorly, that learning programmes were absent and that it was a divided community. In this connection, the Education Review Office emphasised the following:

1. “Many people expressed suspicion about other groups. Staff, students and parents are upset about the stage the discord has reached and distrust, contempt and fear are openly expressed” (Education Review Office, 1993: 8).
2. The division at Four Avenues was having a detrimental effect on student learning, according to many parents (Education Review Office, 1993: 8). Side taking and the

endless dealing with disputes in school meetings had come to dominate the lives of those in the school.

3. Four Avenues was an unsafe emotional and physical environment for staff and students (Education Review Office, 1992: 8). Concerns were expressed by some about the treatment of females within the school. Females were marginalised in both the school's formal and informal processes.
4. Rather than an "effective working relationship" between the Hagley Board of Trustees and the Four Avenues management committee, the relationship between the two parties had broken down to such an extent that Hagley was in the process of divesting itself of any governance role in Four Avenues (Education Review Office, 1993: 14, 11).

After what they saw as a positive report in 1992, many students and parents at Four Avenues were upset by this damning assessment. *The Press*' reporting of the Education Review Office Audit highlighted some of its most sensational claims, such as: that students received less than one period a week of English, no science and little mathematics, and that there were high levels of sexual harassment of female staff and students at the school (Espiner, 1993c: 3). It quoted the Education Review Office's Chief Review Officer: "It was clear that Four Avenues ... was no longer seen as an alternative school, but as an alternative to school" (Espiner, 1993c: 3). No longer was Four Avenues seen as workable by the Education Review Office either in terms of management or pedagogy.

Many members of the Four Avenues community saw the affirmations of the 1992 review as the initial step towards the status of autonomy from Hagley Community College, while the 1993 report was seen as "disastrous" (Anonymous, 1993a: 3). Some parents and students at Four Avenues vowed to fight, arguing that Hagley Community College's recommendation to the Minister of Education to turn their school into a special needs unit that "would effectively shut out students who attended alternative education of their own volition" (Anonymous, 1993a: 3). However, Four Avenues' fate was inevitable. Although the Director of Four Avenues made a last minute proposal to save the school and keep it in the control of Hagley, the only response she got from the Hagley Board of Trustees was their position on the future of Four Avenues was irreversible (Anonymous, 1993b: 4). By 1994, Four Avenues had been turned into the "Hagley Development Centre," a centre established to cater for special needs students and integrate them into mainstream secondary schooling (Espiner, 1994: 4).



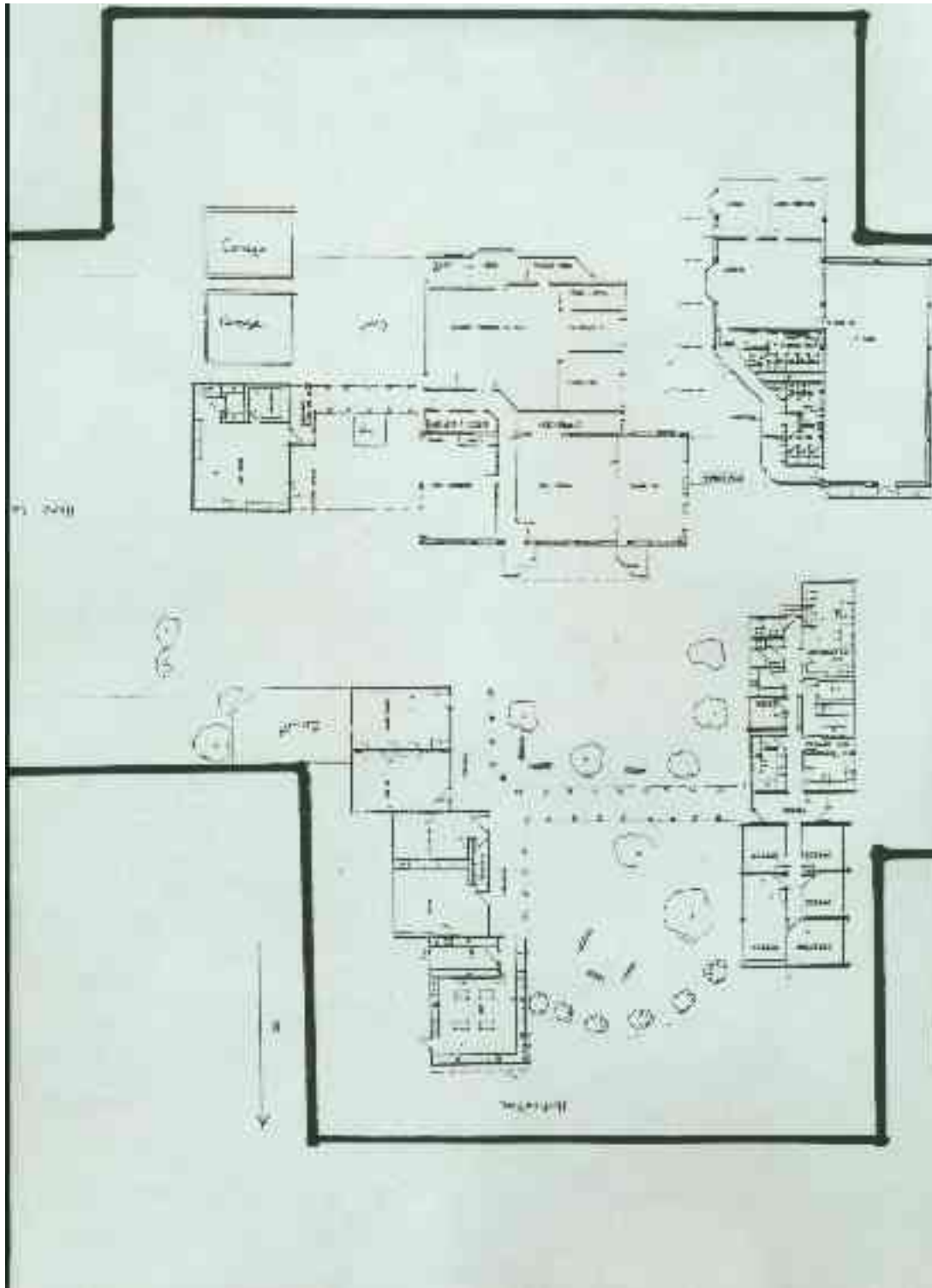


Figure 5: Aerial map of Four Avenues' third building in Champion Street, Christchurch. Sourced from the personal papers of Graeme Penny.

## ***Contention between Hagley and Four Avenues***

What happened between these two reports? How did relationships at Four Avenues go from ones marked by trust, friendliness and a willingness to work through differences to ones that were marked by suspicion, fear and contempt? How did the relationship between Four Avenues and Hagley Community College go from the point where the Education Review Office (1992) claimed there was an “effective working relationship” between the two schools to the point where the Hagley Board of Trustees divested itself of any governance role in Four Avenues (Education Review Office, 1993: 11, 14)? To adequately answer these questions, an appreciation of what happened in the New Zealand education system from 1984 to 1993 is needed. The following section provides an overview of wider institutional and legislative changes in New Zealand compulsory education in the 1980s and 1990s and shows how they affected the relationship between Hagley Community College and Four Avenues.

### **Reforming of New Zealand Education**

To return for a moment to a focus in the last chapter: the tenure of Merv Wellington as Minister of Education in the early 1980s. The approach of his government to educational reform was described in his own words as that of “incremental change” and “constant modification” (Dale, 1994: 70). This was consistent with the macroeconomic policy of his government, which was characterised as “tinkering” by Robert Muldoon. What this language suggested was that the Third National Government believed the best approach to policy implementation and economic management was that of subtle modification rather than general structural change.<sup>31</sup> With the election of the Fourth Labour Government in 1984, however, this approach was largely abandoned for one of radical structural change in the public sector and the economy. Public services, for example, like rail, post, telecommunications and electricity were quickly corporatised and turned into “state-owned enterprises,” creating widespread unemployment. Under Labour’s Minister of Finance, New Zealand went from having a centrally controlled economy to one that was one of the most deregulated among Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) nations (Bassett, 1998: 17). Long-standing labour market regulations, including arbitration, were also done away with. Yet what

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<sup>31</sup>As Derek Quigley’s failed challenge for the leadership of the National Party in 1983, and subsequent expulsion from the National Party Caucus shows, not all members of the Third National Government concurred with the incremental change” and “constant modification” approach to economic management.

was peculiar about the education sector from 1984 to 1987 was that it was left largely untouched by the reformist policies introduced by the Fourth Labour Government (Dale, 1994: 70). While other areas of the state sector were being corporatised, or at least being prepared or considered for some kind of structural change in line with the government's free market principles, the education system under Russell Marshall as Minister of Education continued along broadly social-democratic lines.

With the presentation of the second-volume Treasury Briefing Paper *Government Management* (New Zealand Treasury, 1987) to the re-elected Labour government in 1987, this situation changed. Appointing supermarket magnate Brian Picot as chairperson, the government established the Commission to Review Educational Administration. This commission produced the report *Administering for Excellence* (Department of Education, 1988), popularly known as the "Picot report." Detailed analyses of the Picot report and its recommendations have been provided elsewhere,<sup>32</sup> and there is little need to engage detailed debates about the political context that produced it. To appreciate the situation of Four Avenues in the 1990s, it is important to understand how the reform process set in motion by this report affected the relationship between Hagley and Four Avenues. Crucially, the reforms were about the administration of education. They sought to devolve the administration of education as far as possible from central government to elected local school boards of trustees, which replaced the old boards of governors and school committees. All existing, intervening tiers of education were to be removed. The Picot report also recommended that each school should formulate its own charter and be funded based on this charter. The central emphasis through the reform process initiated by the Picot report was on the governance, administration and management of education. The process and content of education were, by comparison with the reports of the Education Development Conference in 1974, barely touched upon by the reforms.

The passing of the Education Act 1989 into legislation implemented many of the proposals of the Picot report. With the passing of this Act, the Department of Education had many of its functions and duties devolved to individual school boards of trustees. It was broken up into a much smaller Ministry of Education, charged with giving policy advice to the Minister of Education, and several other organisations with specific areas of responsibility: the Education Review Office, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the Special Education Service. The reform process made the administration of educational institutions less and less the

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<sup>32</sup>For example, a summary of the Picot Report is provided in Peters and Olssen (1999: 181-84).

responsibility of the state. For schools, this was done through the requirement that each one of them develop a charter that would be the basis for government funding. Local boards of trustees were also given the responsibility for employing staff in schools and managing school property. The Picot report argued devolving such responsibilities to boards of trustees would give individual schools and their community a greater say in key areas of educational administration and management (Peters and Olssen, 1999: 181-83). The report appealed to ideals of participatory democracy and argued that concentrating educational funding at the local school level would be more inherently empowering for citizens and local communities than administration under the Department of Education. Educationalists like Gordon (1992), however, have questioned whether the reforms initiated by the Education Act 1989 really increased the substantive control that schools had in key administrative areas. Gordon argues the newly created government agencies under the Education Act 1989 (like the Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office) effectively retained control of education but were no longer accountable for everything that went on in schools, as had been the case under the old Department of Education regime. In other words, the reforms meant the state effectively retained control of education, but that accountability and responsibility for educational administration was shifted to individual school boards of trustees.

The stated intention of the Picot report was to come up with ways of devolving the control and responsibility for education to local boards of trustees and communities in accordance with principles of participatory democracy. However, with the passing of the Education Amendment Act 1990 and the Education Amendment Act 1991 into legislation, emphasis shifted from the devolution of control in education to the delegation of responsibility on the part of the government.<sup>33</sup> This shift in emphasis was discernible in *Today's Schools* (Ministry of Education, 1990), the report produced by the committee established by the State Services Commission to review the implementation of the Education Act 1989.<sup>34</sup> *Today's Schools* argued the New Zealand education system was dominated by the interests of educational professionals, which did not always coincide with the interests of parents and students. What the education system needed, it argued, was a mechanism of public accountability that was not

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<sup>33</sup>For this distinction, I am indebted to Peters and Olssen (1999: 184).

<sup>34</sup>There has been a tendency in the literature dealing with the post-1984 public sector and economic reforms to over-emphasise the role played by the Treasury in the whole process. By discussing *Today's Schools* (Ministry of Education, 1990) and the role of the State Services Commission, I have tried to show *pace* the trend of the argument in Peters and Olssen, (1999) that the reforms in education initiated by the Picot report cannot be reduced to the neo-liberal arguments in the New Zealand Treasury's (1987) *Government Management*. Of course, they played a crucial role. Yet just as important were the perspectives on public sector management developed by the State Services Commission that emphasised general efficiency and public accountability rather than privatisation as *Government Management* did.

“captured” by the interests of educational providers. The report argued the Education Review Office could provide such a mechanism. Established under the Education Act 1989, the Education Review Office was intended as a mechanism for peer and professional assessment (for example, the Education Review Office was meant to monitor the implementation of charters by individual schools). However, the report argued the Education Review Office needed an independent (and almost adversarial) function in relation to the compulsory education sector. *Today’s Schools* suggested the role of the Education Review Office be that of assessing the quality of management and teaching in schools under the auspices of general efficiency and public accountability (Dale, 1994: 72). As a part of the public sector, the report argued compulsory education needed to have its “exceptionality” or “special status” removed (Dale, 1994: 72). Principles of efficient management and economic viability, in other words, were to figure more prominently in the compulsory education sector than they had in the past.

Underlying these proposals in *Today’s Schools* (Ministry of Education, 1990) was an understanding of public sector delegation according to principal-agency theory and the concept of self-managing institutions (Peters and Olssen, 1999: 184). Principal-agency theory describes how the costs of economic transactions can be minimised by the government monitoring and enforcing a set of contracts with agents whose interests may diverge from those of the state. In the reforms embodied in the Education Act 1989, the Education Amendment Act 1990 and the Education Amendment Act 1991, it was devolution in the principal-agent sense that prevailed (Peters and Olssen, 1999: 184). Accountability mechanisms were set in place between the state and individual boards of trustees that consisted of a series of contractual relationships. Charters established specified outcomes and performance indicators for each school and periodic Education Review Office audits were designed to measure a school’s performance against its charter objectives. As Dale (1994) says, the educational reforms of the 1980s and early 1990s made issues of public accountability paramount and lessened the role of professional and “sector specific” concerns in assessing compulsory education (72).

### **Bulk Funding Trial**

The proposed bulk-funding of teacher salaries and school operations was one of the nexus of reforms introduced in the Education Act 1989, the Education Amendment Act 1990 and the Education Amendment Act 1991 (Peters and Olssen, 1999: 183). Instead of being directly

funded from central government, individual boards of trustees would receive a bulk sum to cover operations costs and teacher salaries. Yet, in the early 1990s, the government faced many difficulties and resistance from teachers in implementing the teacher salaries part of bulk-funding. Problems for the government were only intensified by the original Education Act 1989. Section 79 of the Act provided for Boards of Trustees to be granted a teacher salaries grant and an operational grant; both these grants together would constitute “bulk funding.” The government had difficulties, however, because Section 91 of the same Act legislated a transitional funding arrangement. Teacher salary grants would not be paid out to individual schools before December 1990. This problem was only intensified for the government when section 22 of the Education Amendment Act 1990 repealed section 91 of the Education Act 1989 and extended the period in which teacher salaries grants were not to be paid to the end of 1991. Section 22 of the Education Amendment Act 1990 also provided that this period could be extended by Order in Council by the Governor-General.

One of the reasons the Education Amendment Act 1990 postponed the introduction of the teacher salaries grant was to provide more time for research into a funding formula that would be equitable for all schools and consistent with the intent of the Picot report proposals. Nevertheless, postponing the teacher salaries component of the bulk-funding scheme had the effect of allowing teachers’ unions and educators who objected to the whole tenor of the Picot report reforms to form their opposition to them around the issue of bulk-funded teacher salaries (Butterworth and Butterworth, 1998: 184).

The National Minister of Education from 1990 to 1996, was strongly committed to the Picot report’s argument the government should devolve the responsibility for school operational costs and teacher salaries to individual boards of trustees. On this issue, however, he encountered concerted resistance from educators and teachers unions like the Post-Primary Teacher’s Association (Butterworth and Butterworth, 1998: 184). To make a complete bulk-funding scenario more attractive, therefore, he offered individual primary and secondary schools the option of “trialling” it for three years (Butterworth and Butterworth, 1998: 183). Four Avenues was one of the schools offered the choice of opting into this trial. For Four Avenues, this offer on the Minister’s part was sweetened with the assurance that if it chose to become a part of the trial then the Ministry of Education would make it autonomous from Hagley Community College and allow it to form its own board of trustees. As with other schools, the Minister also guaranteed Four Avenues that it would not have to operate its own staff payroll and that it could transfer funds between operational and salaries grants

(Butterworth and Butterworth, 1998: 183).

The Minister believed this would appeal to schools like Four Avenues. For one of the problems with the terms of the Education Act 1989 and the Education Amendment Act 1990 was that its provisional splitting of salaries and operational grants had caused a situation where hundreds of schools had found it necessary to increase staffing levels by drawing upon operations grants and locally sourced funds (Butterworth and Butterworth, 1998: 183). The number of schools that expressed interest in this trial, however, was much lower than the Minister wanted. Teacher scepticism and resistance contributed to this lack of interest, and this was supported by a New Zealand Educational Institute study that claimed that 80 percent of schools would be disadvantaged if they chose to join the full bulk-funding trial offered by the government (Butterworth and Butterworth, 1998: 184).

Two hundred schools by October 1991 expressed interest in the bulk-funding salaries trial, including Four Avenues (Butterworth and Butterworth, 1998: 184). The trial appealed to Four Avenues because it was a means of achieving the status of autonomy, which it had sought since it was re-established by the Minister of Education in 1985. However, in July 1992, Four Avenues chose not to become a part of the trial. In taking this course of action, it joined over 152 schools in New Zealand in deciding against it (Butterworth and Butterworth, 1998: 184).

### **Attachment Negotiations**

By choosing not to join the teacher salaries bulk-funding trial, Four Avenues chose the alternative offered by the Minister of Education of remaining an attached unit of Hagley Community College under the formal authority of the Hagley Board of Trustees. Four Avenues believed that in choosing not to become part of the trial the relationship between the two schools would continue as it had before—i.e. formally attached, but practically self-governing organisations dealing directly with the Ministry of Education. However, by declining the offer of bulk-funding, the Minister of Education directed the Ministry of Education to review and formalise attachment arrangements between the Ministry, Four Avenues and Hagley Community College (Ministry of Education, 1993). Four Avenues “initially ... was reluctant,” the Ministry of Education claims, in proceeding with these negotiations (Ministry of Education, 1993). After Four Avenues declined the bulk-funding trial, “it continued to request a review of the decision or other ways in which they could attain

the status of autonomy” (Ministry of Education, 1993).

### **A Legal Board of Trustees?**

In 1992 and 1993, there were “ongoing but infrequent meetings” between the Ministry of Education, Hagley Community College and Four Avenues “over some contentious issues” (Ministry of Education, 1993). From the Ministry’s perspective, Four Avenues did not have a legal board of trustees in terms of the provisions of the Education Act 1989 for primary and secondary schools (Ministry of Education, 1993). What it did legally have “was a management committee with parent representatives elected through a democratic process” (Ministry of Education, 1992). However, by 1992 the Ministry became concerned over claims the Four Avenues’ management committee was exercising the executive powers of a school board of trustees, even though they were an elected committee with delegated functions from the Hagley Board of Trustees (Ministry of Education, 1993).

During the discussions between Four Avenues, Hagley and the Ministry over the details of attachment there was confusion on the part of Hagley and the Ministry over how the Four Avenues management committee had come to assume the role of a proxy board of trustees (Ministry of Education, 1992). In a report presented to the Hagley Board of Trustees in August 1993, the Deputy Principal of Hagley provided some observations on how this situation developed.<sup>35</sup> He claimed it developed because of an expectation on the part of Four Avenues of “immanent autonomy” from Hagley and the belief that neither the Ministry, Hagley nor the Director of Four Avenues (who was ultimately responsible to the Hagley Board of Trustees) “had any rights or authority to establish constraints” on the operations of Four Avenues (Deputy Principal, 1993: 2). The introduction of Education Act 1989, he claimed, contributed to this development. Under this Act, every primary and secondary school in New Zealand was given a bank account and school number and treated as an autonomous and independent institution by the Ministry. Four Avenues too was provided with a bank account and school number and treated as an independent school. Based on legal advice, the Ministry later found the management committee at Four Avenues was not a legal board of trustees (Solicitor, 1993). However, for a while the Ministry of Education seems to have treated the Four Avenues management committee as a virtual board of trustees. Therefore,

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<sup>35</sup>This report was produced by the Hagley Deputy Principal after spending three weeks at Four Avenues in July 1993 while the Director of Four Avenues was on leave.



according to the Deputy Principal of Hagley, the management committee of Four Avenues assumed the functions of a board of trustees because after the passing of the Education Act 1989 Four Avenues was treated as an independent school by the Ministry. Moreover, the Deputy Principal argued the management committee assumed the functions of a full school board at Four Avenues because it was not sufficiently recognised or acknowledged by the Ministry, Four Avenues and Hagley that the Hagley Board retained control when it came to Four Avenues' operations.

### **Legal Responsibility?**

Another issue in the negotiations between the Ministry, Hagley and Four Avenues was over who had direct responsibility for what happened at Four Avenues. Was it the Hagley Board of Trustees or Four Avenues itself? As with the Four Avenues' management committee becoming a virtual board of trustees, confusion between all three parties existed here. For example, in correspondence with Four Avenues, the Ministry of Education often addressed the Director of Four Avenues as "Principal," and called Four Avenues a "school" or "high school," although there was no legal basis for doing this (Ministry of Education, 1993). The Education Review Office added to this confusion further by reviewing Four Avenues in 1992 as if it was autonomous school with only a nominal attachment to Hagley (Hagley Community College, 1993a: 2).<sup>36</sup>

Issues to do with responsibility for Four Avenues did not come to the attention of Hagley Community College as long as there was little concern on its part about what went on in the school. The lack of awareness over these issues on Hagley's part was highlighted when its Principal and Deputy Principal<sup>37</sup> were involved in the appointment of a director for Four Avenues in the early 1990s. Both were unsure of the precedents in selecting a candidate or the kind of role they should play in the selection process, "but the process went ahead and everything seemed to go smoothly" (Deputy Principal, Hagley Community College, interview, 14 August 2002). Both were aware of Four Avenues' historic connection with Hagley, but they both saw Four Avenues as more or less a separate organisation. Hence, there was

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<sup>36</sup>The claim is made by Hagley that the 1992 Education Review Office (1992) audit of Four Avenues refers to its management committee as a "Board of Trustees" (Hagley Community College, 1993: 3). However, my reading of the audit shows the Education Review Office did not do this. It is possible that the wording of this audit could have been revised after objections from Hagley Community College.

<sup>37</sup>The Principal and Deputy Principal of Hagley Community College were new in their positions at the time they appointed a Director for Four Avenues in 1991, having spent less than a year in their positions.

uncertainty on the part of the Deputy Principal and Principal of Hagley over where their school's responsibility exactly lay in appointing a director for Four Avenues.

The issue of responsibility for Four Avenues began to concern Hagley Community College after the appointment of a director for Four Avenues in 1990. Approaches were made to the Ministry of Education from people at Four Avenues about improper conduct occurring in the school (Espiner, 1993b). One of the most serious allegations was that a male staff member was having an improper relationship with a 16-year-old student (Deputy Principal, Hagley Community College, interview, 14 August 2002). Other allegations included discrimination against female staff members and the verbal abuse of female students by male students that often went unreprimed. Apart from the accusations of verbal abuse often going unchecked, which were reproduced in the 1993 Education Review Office (1993) audit of Four Avenues, Hagley found after a formal investigation process "no evidence" for the other allegation of improper conduct (Deputy Principal, Hagley Community College, interview, 14 August 2002).

Hagley Community College realised in the early 1990s that it was legally responsible for everything that went on at Four Avenues (Deputy Principal, Hagley Community College, interview, 14 August 2002). From its perspective, however, direct responsibility in this matter was not clear. Four Avenues was funded and staffed by the Ministry of Education as separate school. In addition, Four Avenues' separateness from Hagley "was so obvious," the Hagley Board of Trustees claimed, "that the [Hagley] Principal ... wrote to the Minister asking whether Hagley still had legal responsibility for Four Avenues" (Hagley Community College, 1993a: 3).

Hagley had an historic association with Four Avenues and it found its Board of Trustees was accountable for what happened at Four Avenues. However, what bothered Hagley was that there was "no mechanism by which we could be responsible for Four Avenues" (Deputy Principal, Hagley Community College, 14 August 2002). This was of particular concern, since the allegations made about conduct at Four Avenues were of such a nature that Hagley feared its Board could face legal proceedings if those who made the allegations pressed charges (Espiner, 1993b). As the discussion above of the reforms of the compulsory education sector showed, the passing of the Education Act 1989 devolved the responsibility for the running of schools from the government to elected boards of trustees. Hagley was concerned its Board would face what many school boards encountered as a result of the passing of the Education

Act 1989: grievance proceedings because of illegal or improper conduct within the school under its jurisdiction. Although the allegations about improper behaviour at Four Avenues remained unsubstantiated, Hagley believed it was only a matter of time before an allegation would have enough evidence to embroil its Board in grievance proceedings.

For Hagley, its negotiations with Four Avenues and the Ministry of Education over attachment were about establishing controls over what happened at Four Avenues. Yet for Hagley, the negotiations were also about control in more mundane matters—that junior students received regular tuition in mathematics, English and science and that staff taught the classes that they were timetabled to teach. According to the Hagley Deputy Principal, one particular action on the part of Four Avenues concerned his school: a decision by a Four Avenues school meeting “to make mathematics not compulsory any more for third and fourth formers, which contravened the legislation that operated for third and fourth formers” (Deputy Principal, Hagley Community College, interview, 14 August 2002). In negotiating an attachment with the Ministry of Education and Four Avenues, Hagley therefore wanted to ensure that decision-making forums at Four Avenues could not make significant changes in matters of policy and practice without the Hagley Board’s involvement and approval.

### **Unsuccessful Negotiations**

Negotiations between the Ministry, Four Avenues and Hagley over attachment eventuated in a “statement” that would be included “as a formal addition to the Hagley Community College Charter” (Hagley Community College and Four Avenues, 1993). This statement went through at least five drafts in 12 months.<sup>38</sup> By June 1993, the Ministry, Four Avenues and Hagley essentially agreed to a version of the document. Even at this stage, however, some within Four Avenues objected to their school becoming part of the agreement because they believed the terms of the document conceded too much of the powers of Four Avenues’ decision-making forums to the Hagley Board of Trustees. Rather than accepting the terms of the document, some within Four Avenues wanted the school to continue to push for autonomy.

A concern about the extent of the powers of Four Avenues decision-making forums was also behind the Hagley Board of Trustees’ reluctance to accept many of the conditions proffered by Four Avenues. The reason for this concern, however, was the opposite of that of Four

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<sup>38</sup>The statement referred to here is the fifth draft of it.

Avenues. Hagley believed the established forums of executive power within Four Avenues operated as “tyrannies of the majority,”<sup>39</sup> and that a large proportion of staff, students and parents were excluded from significant participation in them (Deputy Principal, 1993: 3). Hagley’s Deputy Principal was harsh in his assessment here. The Four Avenues management committee “operated as a version of Revolutionary France’s ‘Committee of Public Safety’”<sup>40</sup> and was the group with established dominance within the school (Deputy Principal, 1993: 3). The decision making forums enshrined clear “pecking orders,” he argued, that effectively marginalised people who dissented from views that were dominant at Four Avenues. Amongst many students and staff, this created a “climate of fear” when it came to expressing views substantially different from the dominant ones (Deputy Principal, 1993: 4).

References to a tyranny of the majority and the Committee of Public Safety show an implicit criticism of Four Avenues’ claims to full participatory democracy on the part of Hagley. Many (even the majority of) parents, staff and students may well have believed and voted in a similar way on a wide range of issues. Yet, there were few mechanisms, Hagley argued, for ensuring that those who wanted to express a different view were given the recognition and encouragement to do so. The concern was that those who thought differently often faced pressure to acquiesce in the views of the majority; and that if they did not, their commitment to Four Avenues was questioned.

### **Dismissal of the Management Committee**

A condition of the attachment statement between Four Avenues and Hagley was that elections for a new Four Avenues management committee would be held in July 1993. Hagley was concerned the existing management committee was unrepresentative of Four Avenues as a whole, and that the interests of long-serving coordinators were effectively “enshrined” in the school’s decision-making processes (Deputy Principal, 1993: 3). Thus, to make the

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<sup>39</sup>The phrase “tyranny of the majority” comes from Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* (2000). Whether or not the Hagley Deputy Principal was aware of the literary lineage of this phrase, de Tocqueville used it to express his fear that the increasing equality of conditions in any polity had the potential to undermine, and even destroy, the mechanisms that safeguarded individual liberties. In other words, a polity governed by the majority (i.e. a democratic polity) had the tendency to become oppressive and exclusionary towards those who did not agree with the views of the majority. A problem de Tocqueville, therefore, wrestled with was how democratic governance could coexist with liberty for individuals who dissented from the views of the majority and full political participation on their part.

<sup>40</sup>The Committee of Public Safety was a 12-person committee that ruled with a reign of terror after the 1789 French Revolution. Thousands were executed on the guillotine as “enemies of the republic.” The irony in this committee is it justified its violence by claiming that it was *compelling* people to be free.

management committee more proportional, Hagley insisted in its attachment statement with Four Avenues (Hagley Community College and Four Avenues, 1993) the new committee consist of the following:

- Up to five parent representatives who were parents of current students at Four Avenues. These representatives would be elected by parents of current students (Hagley Community College and Four Avenues, 1993: 2).
- Two student representatives who would be elected by the current student body (Hagley Community College and Four Avenues, 1993: 2).
- One person appointed by the Hagley Board of Trustees to represent its interests;
- The Director of Four Avenues (Hagley Community College and Four Avenues, 1993: 2);
- One representative of the Tangata Whenua who would be chosen after consultation with the Kaumatua of Hagley Community College (Hagley Community College and Four Avenues, 1993: 2).
- One representative of the staff at Four Avenues elected by the Four Avenues staff (Hagley Community College and Four Avenues, 1993: 2).
- Other “co-options” approved by the Hagley Board (Hagley Community College and Four Avenues, 1993: 2).

Between the time the attachment statement was all but agreed to by both schools and the election of a new management committee for Four Avenues in July 1993, there was a small but significant interval where the existing management committee at Four Avenues would operate as before; that is, exercise much of the executive power at Four Avenues. This interval was of concern to Hagley, because it gave the existing management committee a small period to operate without a direct line of accountability to the Hagley Board. Hagley’s concern over the management committee’s lack of accountability in this period was heightened by reports the committee operated outside its legal powers. During one of its meetings, for example, the management committee cross-examined a staff member at Four Avenues and effected a dismissal (Secretary for Education, 1993). The Hagley Board was forced to reinstate this staff member, because the legal capacity to dismiss staff lay with Hagley and not Four Avenues. Since the Hagley Board was the legal employer of this staff member, it feared it would be liable if a grievance proceeding was taken by this person to the Employment Court (Espiner, 1993b).

To avoid further situations like this, the Hagley Board took the step of dismissing the Four Avenues management committee less than a month before the July 1993 elections to form a new committee (Espiner, 1993a). Hagley informed Four Avenues of this decision in a letter, claiming it was done in the interests of a “smooth transition” to the July elections (Espiner, 1993a). By dismissing the committee, Hagley wanted to take full control of Four Avenues until the election of a new management committee, which it hoped would be more compliant with its demands (Espiner, 1993a).

### ***Response to the Dismissal***

Hagley claimed the dismissal of the Four Avenues management committee was to ensure “proper procedures were followed” as far as “financial, staffing and discipline matters at Four Avenues” were concerned (Espiner, 1993a). Many at Four Avenues, however, “saw the move as the first step in a plan to take over the running of the school” (Espiner, 1993b). During the attachment negotiations between Hagley, the Ministry and Four Avenues in 1992 and 1993, some at Four Avenues were anxious about Hagley’s insistence on having a direct role in the decision-making processes of their school. The conditions of the attachment statement between the two schools, they believed, effectively handed control of Four Avenues over from its internal “democratic processes” to direct autocratic control by the Hagley Board of Trustees (Parent at Four Avenues, 1993b).

On 10 June 1993, a meeting was held by members and supporters of Four Avenues to consider a collective response to Hagley’s dismissal of its management committee (Chairperson, Four Avenues Management Committee, 1993). The meeting was attended by 92 people. Resolutions approved in the meeting included:

- Continuing confidence in the dismissed management committee (Chairperson, Four Avenues Management Committee, 1993).
- Indignation over the Hagley Board of Trustees’ “undemocratic actions” (Chairperson, Four Avenues Management Committee, 1993).
- Further attempts to get the Hagley Board of Trustees and representatives of the dismissed management committee together (Chairperson, Four Avenues Management Committee, 1993).

Much effort in this forum went into the unmitigated and relentless preaching of unity. This was evident in a letter from the chairperson of the Four Avenues management committee (1993) to the Hagley Board of Trustees. She emphasised all resolutions were “approved by consensus” at the meeting and that “Authority for leadership comes from the ongoing endorsement and consent of the Four Avenues community” (Chairperson, Four Avenues management committee, 1993). Hagley, on the other hand, was depicted as acting heavy-handedly and “undemocratically.” Indignation in this forum over the Hagley’s Board dismissal of the committee was fuelled by the claim it was refusing to answer any questions about its decision to sack the management committee (Parent at Four Avenues, 1993a).

The meeting elected a subcommittee “consisting of former management committee members and other supporters” to communicate with the Hagley Board of Trustees (Chairperson, Four Avenues Management Committee, 1993). Those present in the forum also decided to hold a hui on the weekend of 26-27 June 1993 in the Four Avenues school premises. An invitation was issued by representatives from the forum to the Hagley Board to attend (Parent at Four Avenues, 1993b). The response of the Hagley Board, however, was that anyone who attended this hui would be charged with trespassing if it was held.

To many at Four Avenues, threats of this kind felt draconian. In *The Press*, it was reported the Hagley Board “threatened” staff from Four Avenues who spoke to the media with dismissal. Accusations were also made that Hagley “clamped down” on the use of school equipment and materials by staff at Four Avenues to advertise the hui. Fears were expressed to the media by members of Four Avenues about Hagley’s “agenda” and what the future would be like as it took greater control (Espiner, 1993d). Never before in the relationship between the two schools had the larger partner taken such a “drastic step” (Chairperson, Four Avenues Management Committee, 1993). To parents, staff and supporters of Four Avenues, Hagley had always deferred the running of the school “to the autonomous democratic practices at Four Avenues” (Chairperson, Four Avenues Management Committee, 1993). The message that many at Four Avenues got, however, was the school that was their own was being taken away from them.

## **Conflict within Four Avenues**

In June 1993, anger at Four Avenues was focused on the person of the Director and the relationship she had with Hagley. The Director was seen as contributing to the disempowerment that many felt at Four Avenues over the dismissal of its management committee. Accusations were made that the Director had continued ongoing “top level” discussions with the Hagley Board over the attachment arrangements and deliberately marginalised everyone else at Four Avenues in the process. A letter from a parent at Four Avenues to the Minister of Education illustrates the shape these accusations took:

The director was specifically asked by the Four Avenues Management Committee not to negotiate over attachment by herself; two members (not her) were elected to do this. She has continually stated that the process was “not up to that stage yet.” We are appalled to find she has been directly and secretly negotiating for six months with the Ministry and Hagley (Parent at Four Avenues, 1993b).<sup>41</sup>

References to “secrecy” indicate some of the “suspicion,” “contempt” and “fear” the Education Review Office (1993) audit observed among the members of the Four Avenues community (8). Much of this was focused on the Director of Four Avenues. The position of ‘Director’ at Four Avenues had largely become a managerial role by the early 1990s (Education Review Office, 1993: appendix 2). Part of the role of Director involved liaising between Four Avenues, Hagley Community College and the Ministry of Education. Ironically, the letter just quoted criticised the Director for doing one of the main things in her job-description. Why was the Director the object of such mistrust?

From the beginning of the tenure of Four Avenues’ last Director, there was tension between her and established staff on many issues. The Director was critical of the established traditions of alternative education at Four Avenues and had an approach to management different from that of the previous Director. For one staff member, the Director herself was simply incommensurable with all that Four Avenues stood for:

There are some who believe that the director does not have a philosophy to replace Four Avenues’ philosophy: that she is a product of the “ME” decade, dedicated to

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<sup>41</sup>This quotation has been modified with the use of the Director’s institutional title and pronouns to avoid references to her personal name and identity.



pursuing self-interest, ready to grab any opportunity to increase her own power and control over everyone around her; that she has little sympathy for democracy and empowering our students; that she hoped to be the youngest principal in New Zealand with an extra salary boost; that she wanted to use Four Avenues to work some impressive-looking changes for her CV before moving up on the career ladder (Coordinator at Four Avenues, 1993a).

Antagonism between the “aims” of the director and the school’s alternative philosophy were seen by the Hagley Deputy Principal as the main cause of its internal discord (Deputy Principal, 1993: 3). Right up until the end of Four Avenues, a group of staff and parents in Four Avenues hoped Hagley would “see” that the Director of Four Avenues was the main cause of its disharmony. In 1984, Graham Mundy had antagonised some staff at Four Avenues as Director and was replaced by Graeme Penny in the position. With this precedent in mind, the group argued the solution to the problems within Four Avenues was the relocation of the present Director within Hagley Community College and the employment of someone else “able to work under the philosophy” of Four Avenues (Parents and Staff at Four Avenues, 1993).

The Director was critical, and sometimes disparaging, of what she called the “‘free choice’ mentality of some of our so-called ‘alternatives’” at Four Avenues (Director, 1993). To her, its traditions of alternative schooling were ineffective, *laissez faire* approaches to education that wasted resources and hindered student achievement. It was unsustainable and needed to be changed. She argued:

It is not “alternative education” that has failed or a lack of need for a small, flexible alternative school in Christchurch. It is the lack of structure and level of obstruction to accountability, evolution and change that has effectively hamstrung what, I strongly believe, could be a fantastic model school with students empowered to achieve, staff motivated to new levels of educating with dynamic, progressive models of teaching, learning and evaluating (Director, 1993).

The above claim the last Director of Four Avenues possessed no philosophy of education was exaggerated. Rather than having no pedagogy, her emphasis was on Four Avenues catering for “problem” and “disadvantaged” students. With no Ministry of Education referral service in Christchurch, it was this “alternative” she envisaged Four Avenues providing rather than the

kind of alternative education Four Avenues had always provided (Director, 1993).

This outlook differed from the view that Four Avenues was not fundamentally for “at risk” students, but a place for “alternative learners” and those who chose an alternative schooling environment. In this connection, the categories of “at risk” and “alternative learner” were ideal types, which often had little correspondence to the educational histories of students who attended Four Avenues. Nevertheless, in the contention over the future of Four Avenues between the Director and others, they represented different rallying points, different answers to the question of who was going to be the focus of the school’s future—the “at risk” teenager or “alternative learner.”

Accepting students with learning and behavioural problems was not really the issue between the Director and some staff at Four Avenues. As the last chapter showed, Four Avenues had done this since the 1970s. The school had prided itself on notable successes with students who were seen as “failures” in previous schools. The point of contention was whether Four Avenues would exclusively focus on “at risk” students or continue to have a mix of “alternative learners” and “problem teenagers.”

Supporting the Director’s position Four Avenues should increasingly focus on catering for “at risk” or problem youth was that most of the students at Four Avenues in the early 1990s did not cite Four Avenues’ educational philosophy as the reason for enrolling (Director, 1993). Many caregivers had their children referred to Four Avenues by government agencies and school counsellors. In addition, many parents saw Four Avenues as a way of getting their adolescent back into regular schooling—often after long histories expulsion from school, repeated suspension or truancy (Director, 1993). These kinds of students, the Director argued, formed the majority of those enrolled at Four Avenues (Director, 1993). She claimed, however, that in spite of their numerical majority, they had minimal representation in the decision-making forums of Four Avenues (Director, 1993). Four Avenues was dominated by staff, parents and students who understood Four Avenues as providing people with the option of getting the kind of alternative education Four Avenues had historically provided. These parents, staff and student had established influence in managing Four Avenues, yet only a minority of students attended Four Avenues for philosophic reasons (Director, 1993).

Those shaped by Four Avenues’ historic traditions of alternative education were willing to accept students who were deemed “problematic” in other high schools. Indeed, with the

analysis of typical student-teacher interaction in the writings of educators like Neill (1968), there was a powerful rationale to do so in these traditions, since they were willing to countenance that the traditional school was to blame for educational failure rather than the individual student. However, there was a huge leap for many staff at Four Avenues from its historic practice of including students with learning and behavioural problems to saying the school would only cater for these kinds of students, and only those at the extreme end of the continuum at that. To some staff at Four Avenues, this is what the Director's attempts to make Four Avenues special needs focused entailed: that it would just contain teenagers other schools and the authorities deemed "serious enough" to be referred. With this criteria, "the true alternative learner" would be excluded as well a whole range of students who had less noticeable difficulties in school—unhappiness, shyness, a lack of social confidence, poor performance. Both of these groups would be denied access to Four Avenues, since the authorities would not deem them sufficiently "at risk."

Whether the Director really intended to do away with Four Avenues' philosophy and its capacity to accept both of these kinds of students is questionable.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, this is what many staff, students and parents interpreted her attempts to move Four Avenues in a particular direction as intimating. Perhaps the Director never fully understood the substantive concerns that coordinators had on this matter. The school was adequately resourced to accept students who were, for example, truant and/or failing because of unhappiness. However, accepting referrals *en masse* from the Kingslea Resource Centre or the Special Education Service would potentially stretch Four Avenues' resources well beyond their capacity to cope.

Whatever the merits of the individual arguments proffered by both sides in the dispute, the Director's own correspondence with the Ministry of Education suggests the genuine differences between both sides were exaggerated in the conflict between the Director and certain members of Four Avenues in 1993. In December 1990 for example, the Director (1990) wrote to the Ministry of Education protesting its decision to withhold \$50,000 of Four Avenues' base funding for 1990 and asked for it to be paid. The Director claimed:

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<sup>42</sup>Early in the academic year of 1992, Four Avenues accepted a sizeable intake of enrolments from students who had come straight from primary different schools. During a school meeting at the start of the year, I remember her speaking enthusiastically about the the enrolment of third-form students from mainstream schools *who had chosen Four Avenues as their high school*. This suggests, I believe, the claims the Director wanted to do away with Four Avenues' capacity to accept a wide range of students were exaggerated in 1993. Moreover, what seems to have escaped the attention of those who accused the Director of a variety of hidden agendas was that she may have discouraged many potential students from enrolling in Four Avenues in 1993 because Four Avenues was a highly charged and unsafe emotional environment at this time.

The school is currently surviving on the goodwill of teachers and staff, who pay for their own professional development, including covering relief, provide frequent transport, all their own consumables and stationary and work voluntary unpaid hours to keep the school open ... Teachers provide much of the main equipment themselves including: expensive photography, music and art gear (Director, 1990).

Furthermore, the penultimate Education Review Office (1992) audit of Four Avenues in 1992 qualifies the claims about the Director by a group of staff and parents in a written submission to the Minister of Education. The submission claimed: “The school’s present troubles have been precipitated by the Director’s inability to function under the philosophy of the school and her inability to convince the community that it should be changed” (Parents and Staff at Four Avenues, 1993). However, only a year earlier, the Education Review Office (1992) had observed “extensive trust ... between coordinators, students and their parents in Four Avenues” (Education Review Office, 1992: 6). In times of conflict, Bauman (1990) argues, “Often minute traits, which under different circumstances could have passed unnoticed, are now dwelled upon and represented as obstacles to cohabitation” (49). He continues: “They become an object of abomination and are used as proof that strict separation is unavoidable and mixing unthinkable” (1990: 49). Some process like this maybe occurred with the “philosophical differences” between the Director and others at Four Avenues, which many at Four Avenues claimed were the cause of the division in the school (Parents and Staff at Four Avenues, 1993; Deputy Principal, 1993). For only a year earlier, the Education Review Office (1992) observed, Four Avenues had the capacity to work through such differences “in a positive way by discussion” (4).

This assessment on the part of the Education Review Office was written in a relatively conflict free period in Four Avenues’ history. Over ten years before the audit, the Department of Education (1979) observed something similar of Four Avenues: “The democratic quality of the school’s administration provides a great strength. It takes a lot of time but it is worked at and is prized by staff and students. We believe it is something alternative, flexible and tangible” (5). Yet this same review by the Department also claimed: “We suspect that in a crisis it is probably unworkable” (1979: 5). With the seeming resolve of the Director to take Four Avenues in one direction and the equal resolve of others at Four Avenues to oppose her in doing that, the claim Four Avenues’ traditions of governance by consensus and democracy would be ineffective in the face of a major internal crisis proved somewhat prescient.



## ***The Hagley Board, the Director and Four Avenues***

Hagley Community College supported the Director in the conflict between her and others at Four Avenues. This is the reason many at Four Avenues felt anger and indignation towards the Hagley Board, especially after its decision to dismiss the Four Avenues management committee. Those who conflicted with the Director and expressed animosity towards the Hagley Board acknowledged and recognised the historical support Hagley had provided Four Avenues since 1975. Nevertheless, what angered many of them was that Hagley seemed to uncritically support the Director, taking her claims as true while being distrustful of the claims of those who disagreed with her. Hagley saw the conflict between the Director and members of Four Avenues solely in terms of the refusal of certain individuals and groups to recognise her authority. The Hagley Deputy Principal reflects this perception when he claims:

It had become a power play between the institutional authority of the Director and the collective authority of the masses. And there was a core of staff and parents who were unwilling to recognise any authority that sat with an individual such as the Director. And frequently school policy would change week by week depending on what the flavour was at the forum meeting. There was no strategic planning at all (interview, 14 August 2002).

Hagley's insistence it supported the "special character" of Four Avenues while completely backing the Director appeared disingenuous to many within the school. Paranoia about Hagley's collusion with the Director became so intense that one staff member at the school claimed the Hagley Board and her were deliberately working to undermine Four Avenues (Co-ordinator, 1993a). The Hagley Board, he argued, found the Director's aims advantageous because it wanted to turn Four Avenues into a "dumping ground" for Hagley's "problem kids" (Coordinator, Four Avenues, 1993b).

The Hagley Board contributed to the anger many at Four Avenues felt towards them by passing a motion during a meeting that the Four Avenues Director be commended "for her professionalism in dealing with the board 'over what has been an onerous and vexatious time'" (Espiner and Morton, 1993). Apart from further isolating the Director from Four Avenues, this action only reinforced the perception the Director and Hagley were somehow secretly colluding to plot the destruction of Four Avenues.

As Hagley was not seen an impartial arbiter in the disagreements between the Director and others at Four Avenues, those who opposed the Director used the media to express their views and the suspicions they had about Hagley. One article from *The Press* implicitly cast Four Avenues as the victim of coercion by its larger partner, Hagley (Espiner, 1993d). The article claimed that a letter from the Hagley Board to staff at Four Avenues “threatened to sack anyone who spoke to the news media” and “prohibited staff from making ‘any statements at a public meeting which could be attended by the media’” (Espiner, 1993d). The article quoted the chairperson of the dismissed management committee: “What is Hagley’s agenda for Four Avenues. That’s what we want to know?” (Espiner, 1993d). It continued: “Some fear Hagley intends ... proposing major changes to the democratic philosophy of Four Avenues” (Espiner, 1993d). This kind of reporting and coverage presented the belief of many staff at Four Avenues that Hagley had a hidden “agenda” for Four Avenues that it was keeping secret.

Hagley Community College took exception to this kind of portrayal of its actions and motives. In a statement to local radio station 3ZB on 24 June 1993, the Chairperson of the Hagley Board countered what she described as the “incorrect agitations of a few noisy members of the Four Avenues community” (Chairperson, Hagley Board of Trustees, 1993). With the “dissolution of the old unconstitutional committee,” she claimed, “the Hagley Board planned to meet disgruntled members of Four Avenues “to explain the formal advice which the Board had received stating that the old committee now had no legal status” (Chairperson, Hagley Board of Trustees, 1993). Yet before this meeting took place, members of Four Avenues, and those with connections to it, took their grievances to the news media and “gave incorrect or incomplete information to both parents and students without any consultation with the Board” (Chairperson, Hagley Board of Trustees, 1993). “The Hagley Board has always supported the special character of Four Avenues School,” she continued, “and to suggest otherwise is scurrilous” (Chairperson, Hagley Board of Trustees, 1993).

This statement from the Hagley Board, of course, was framed for media dissemination. What it indicates, nonetheless, is that many at Four Avenues did not believe Hagley’s claims that it had Four Avenues’ interests at heart. Hagley publicly claimed in the media: “Four Avenues had no reason to fear the attachment to Hagley, which the college was negotiating out of goodwill alone” (Espiner and Morton, 1993). Yet the dismissal of Four Avenues’ own management committee suggested to many at Four Avenues that the way their school was run, and thus expressed its “special character,” was under threat. The Hagley Board’s intimidating tones to staff at Four Avenues who organised and worked to have the management committee

reinstated<sup>43</sup> also did not instil confidence in many at Four Avenues that Hagley was genuinely concerned with preserving Four Avenues' philosophy and way of life. As the Director of Four Avenues from 1984 to 1990 put it in a letter to the Ministry of Education: "Four Avenues is a fragile and finely balanced structure. Any imposition of authority on its processes produces real trauma" (Former Director, 1993).

Four Avenues took pride in being a school with a virtual absence of hierarchical authority; to use the title of a monograph by Swidler (1979), it understood itself as an "organisation without authority." The Chairperson of the dismissed management committee reflected this understanding when she claimed: "Authority for leadership comes from the ongoing endorsement and consent of the Four Avenues community" (Chairperson, Four Avenues Management Committee, 1993). No matter how legitimate Hagley's exercise of its authority in the dismissal of the management committee was, to most at Four Avenues this action came as a tremendous blow. Dismissing the management committee was seen as going against everything Four Avenues stood for, which Hagley insisted it wanted to continue to support.

In the early 1990s, the Hagley Board of Trustees inherited a relationship with Four Avenues that was set in place in the 1970s largely for the purposes of accommodating the wishes of both Four Avenues and Hagley to remain separate organisations while fulfilling the conditions of the Education Act 1964. The Department of Education needed the support of the Hagley Board of Governors to establish Four Avenues as a legal organisation, and this was provided by Hagley after a long process of negotiation. With the passing of the Education Act 1989, the Education Amendment Act 1990 and the Education Amendment 1991, however, Hagley's responsibility for Four Avenues through its Board of Trustees was more clearly defined and stated. When the Hagley Board in the 1990s came to understand this, they were faced with a number of problems and allegations about behaviour at Four Avenues they did not want responsibility for. This reluctance was "coupled," as the Four Avenues Director put, "with a feeling of a lack of ownership of the problems" (Four Avenues, 1993: 3). The dismissal of the management committee by the Board was seen as way of quickly dealing with these problems so that they did not potentially develop into grievance proceedings.

Hagley's assessment of Four Avenues as a "tyranny of the majority" likewise is important in appreciating something of the rationale behind its decision to dismiss the management committee (Deputy Principal, 1993: 2). In this connection, from Hagley's perspective the

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<sup>43</sup>At least according to media coverage from the time.



“majority” at Four Avenues were not the numerical majority of students, parents and staff but only “those with established influence in the group” (Deputy Principal, 1993: 2). In other words, the “majority” at Four Avenues were those who were unwilling to work with the Hagley Board in the “productive parts of the [attachment] process” (Deputy Principal, 1993: 2). The numerical majority, however, were the members of Four Avenues “willing to work with the Director and the Hagley Board from day one” (Deputy Principal, 1993: 2). The Chairperson of the Hagley Board reflected this perception too when she called those who organised to reinstate the management committee “a few noisy members of the Four Avenues community” (Chairperson, 1993).

This suggests then that Hagley Community College largely “misread” the situation at Four Avenues. It believed the management committee was unrepresentative of Four Avenues as whole rather than an activist core that shaped, and thus represented, the views of many at Four Avenues. That the Hagley Board had a misunderstanding of this kind is indicated by the later claims of the Hagley Deputy Principal:

Deputy Principal: There were parents and teachers who were quite prepared to work with me over the attachment agreement. But the other group was the powerful group.

Paul: How large was that group?

Deputy Principal: About half a dozen people with strong personalities and perhaps another six to ten adults who supported them. But they had the power to drag the students with them (interview, 14 August 2002).

With the relatively low and intermittent interaction of the Hagley Board in Four Avenues’ history, it was not surprising Hagley had many misunderstandings about how Four Avenues worked when it tried to become more directly involved (Director, 1993: 3). In dismissing the Four Avenues management committee, Hagley seems to have thought “they would receive support from all quarters with this provocative step and its delivery” (Director, 1993: 3). As Hagley’s subsequent reinstatement of the management committee demonstrated, it soon realised this perception was wrong (Secretary, Hagley Community College Board of Trustees, 1993).

## *Severing ties with Four Avenues*

According to the news media statement from the Hagley Board of Trustees at the end of June 1993, Hagley still believed “that the vast majority of the school’s [Four Avenues’] caregivers are behind the Board and its attempts to give Four Avenues school a legally secure future” (Chairperson, Hagley Board of Trustees, 1993). In a letter to the staff at Four Avenues, the Chairperson of the Board reinforced this expectation by reassuring them: “We are committed to helping you maintain the special character of Four Avenues as we have always been” (Chairperson, Hagley Board of Trustees, 1993b). Yet, in August 1993, the Hagley Board of Trustees voted to sever all links with Four Avenues, claiming it was tired of protracted and unproductive negotiations (Murphy, 1993). The Hagley Board, in the space of a month, moved from seeing attachment with Four Avenues as imaginable to viewing it as impracticable (Principal, 1993: 7). From this point onwards, it was resolute in rejecting the suggestion that any future attachment between it and Four Avenues was possible, as the Director of Four Avenues discovered when she attempted a final rapprochement with Hagley in November 1993 to prevent Four Avenues from closing.

Three developments contributed to the Hagley Board’s hardening attitude towards Four Avenues. A report from the Hagley Principal (Principal, 1993) to the Hagley Board in August 1993 shows what, first, contributed to this change. Four Avenues, he claimed, “was in open anarchy [sic] with being accountable” (Principal, 1993: 7). Members of the dismissed management committee “refuse to be accountable” to the Hagley Board—even after their reinstatement—and most staff at Four Avenues “refuse to be accountable to the Director” (Principal, 1993: 7). The problem Hagley faced was that Four Avenues was legally under its jurisdiction, and the corollary of this was the Hagley Board was ultimately responsible for what happened at Four Avenues. Yet when the Hagley Board tried to assume a greater role in the running of Four Avenues, it found its efforts to do this were “ignored and actively thwarted” by members of the Four Avenues community (Principal, 1993: 7). For Hagley, the problems at Four Avenues appeared unsolvable because of the unyielding stand of “alternative style” staff and parents who had a “blind faith in the existing school philosophy” (Hagley Community College, 1993a: 9). Reflecting this perspective, the Hagley Deputy Principal says:

There was a fixation with a particular group that if you resisted strongly enough politically that somehow the rules would be changed. But the rules never change.

The Ministry was bound by the 1989 Education Act. I think the force of the Act wasn't appreciated by this group. They just felt that with enough political pressure they would get what they wanted. And in fact they ended up losing it all (interview, 14 August 2002).

Since many members of Four Avenues were unwilling to compromise when it came to working with Hagley, Hagley adopted an equally uncompromising position. Having little control or cooperation in Four Avenues as far as compliance with the “rules” were concerned, Hagley decided that the only way to avoid liability for what happened at Four Avenues was to sever all ties with it. “We are dealing with a small group [at Four Avenues] “that are litigious, volatile, unpredictable and who delight at broadening the confrontational front at every possible opportunity” (Hagley Community College, 1993a: 6). Claims like this indicate how “weeks of emotive claim and counter claim” caused both schools to drift towards deep and lasting schism (Espiner, 1993b). Language like “open anarchy” (Principal, 1993: 7) also shows that neither Hagley Community College nor Four Avenues remembered the original source for their conflict at this stage; both sides, instead, became incensed by the bitterness of their present fight and the implacability of the other.<sup>44</sup> Whatever goodwill may have existed between Four Avenues and Hagley even a month before was now gone. Anxiety and hostile feelings reached boiling point on both sides. Yet Hagley had the resources (statutes, legislation and so on) to ensure that its own subjective view in its dispute with Four Avenues was synonymous with the objective, that is, the institutional view of the Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office.

The sequence of “emotive claim and counter-claim” between Hagley and Four Avenues indicates the second reason for Hagley’s decision to cut all ties with Four Avenues: members of Hagley were the target themselves of the same kind of personal invective which was aimed at the Director at Four Avenues. The following statement from the Principal (1993) of Hagley to his own school’s Board of Trustees shows how this only intensified the bitterness between Hagley and Four Avenues:

My family, including my daughters, have received abusive phone calls from individuals purporting to be from the Four Avenues community. I have little interest in continuing a relationship with an organisation that places my family in jeopardy (5).

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<sup>44</sup>For this analysis, I am indebted to Bauman (1990: 51).

The “venom” of people associated with Four Avenues towards the Principal of Hagley provoked further anger at Hagley towards Four Avenues, and had the effect of intensifying the existing differences between the two schools (Murphy, 1993). Hagley decided to pull away from Four Avenues because the boundaries between the personal and professional were indistinguishable.

The third reason Hagley decided to sever all links with Four Avenues was that becoming more directly involved in Four Avenues’ internal matters and problems was time-consuming for the Hagley Board. For the first time in the two schools’ 18-year history, Hagley Community College received funding from the Ministry of Education in 1993 to administer Four Avenues (Hagley Community College, 1993a: 6). Yet in June and July of that year, Hagley spent over 280 hours in dealing with issues related to Four Avenues (Murphy, 1993). This amount of time was more than the allocation from the Ministry of Education allowed, which was provided to cover administration costs for the whole year (Murphy, 1993). In 1993, the Hagley Board of Trustees managed a high school that included over 140 full-time equivalent staff and over 5,000 students (Hagley Community College, 1993a: 6). Students and staff at Four Avenues were less than two percent of this population. Yet Hagley found that dealing more closely with Four Avenues absorbed a disproportionate amount of its time and resources. In the two-month period of June to July 1993, Hagley incurred legal costs of \$3,600 (Inc GST) as it was required to seek legal advice concerning problems at Four Avenues (Principal, 1993: 2). With this occurring, the Hagley Principal (1993) suggested Hagley should “focus on its total community” rather than on being a host school for Four Avenues” (2).

What the Hagley Board may have failed to fully appreciate or understand in seeking to have a more direct role in the running of Four Avenues was that their historic connection with Four Avenues—that they dismissed as “unaccountable”—was a relationship that had effectively integrated the interests of both schools for 18 years. Four Avenues had independence in managing its own affairs, while the Hagley Board was able to concentrate on what happened in Hagley, without being too concerned about their “attached unit.” The advantages of this relationship were evident when the Ministry of Education advised the Hagley Board they legally had to assume a more direct role in managing Four Avenues. As the Hagley Board of Governors anticipated in the mid-1970s, trying to directly manage Four Avenues *and* Hagley proved to be a time-consuming and expensive exercise for Hagley. Inevitably, matters relating to Hagley Community College were neglected by the Hagley Board as they became embroiled

in an ultimately ineffectual, protracted and often hostile process of negotiation with Four Avenues.

With nothing to gain from an association with Four Avenues, the Hagley Board separated from the school. By rejecting autonomy through the government's bulk-funding salaries trial 1992, Four Avenues had to find another high school in Christchurch to attach itself to if it wanted to remain open. Not surprisingly, because of the internal tensions at Four Avenues, and the reluctance of many within it to comply with the requirements of Hagley, no other high school in Christchurch was willing to assume full responsibility for the school.<sup>45</sup> Being unable, therefore, to find a school that was both willing to be associated with Four Avenues and deal with the problems within it, the Ministry of Education accepted the recommendation of Education Review Office and closed Four Avenues at the end of 1993.

## ***Conclusion***

Chapter 6 has discussed the third turning point in Four Avenues' history: the 1993 Education Review Office audit of Four Avenues that recommended Four Avenues' closure and effectively sealed its end. Starting with a detailed analysis of the 1992 and 1993 audits of Four Avenues, chapter 6 has considered what happened in the year or so between the two audits to bring about Four Avenues' ultimate demise in the education system.

In discussing what happened at Four Avenues in between these two audits, chapter 6 has shown how legislative and institutional reforms in the New Zealand compulsory education sector in the late 1980s and early 1990s fundamentally altered the long-standing relationship between Four Avenues and Hagley. These reforms made Hagley directly responsible for Four Avenues. Chapter 6 has shown these reforms had the effect of allowing the government to retain control of the compulsory education sector while devolving responsibility for it to individual school boards of trustees. This meant the long-standing arrangement between Hagley and Four Avenues—Hagley having a nominal kind of responsibility for Four Avenues while Four Avenues was an independent organisation responsible for its own affairs—could

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<sup>45</sup>The response Mairehau High School gave to the Ministry of Education about possible attachment to Four Avenues is typical of other high schools in Christchurch when approached by the Ministry about replacing Hagley as Four Avenues' host school: "Under the present circumstances we understand the difficulty is with the Four Avenues management committee's unwillingness to meet the host school's requirements. We have no wish as a Board to be involved in what appears to be an unresolved conflict" (Principal, Mairehau High School, in a letter to Manager, National Operations [South Island], Ministry of Education, 12 August 1993).

not continue. Much of the conflict therefore that developed between Four Avenues and Hagley was because members of Four Avenues believed Four Avenues' relationship with Hagley could continue in the way it had since the mid-1970s.

Chapter 6 has also considered in detail how the appointment of a new Director in 1990 contributed to conflict at Four Avenues. The new Director had a focus on providing an environment for students who were “at risk” or in need of “special needs” education. Other staff members at Four Avenues, however, focused on preserving what they saw as Four Avenues’ “alternative” educational ethos and they saw the Director as threatening this. Chapter 6 has shown that much of the conflict within Four Avenues in the early 1990s happened because people within Four Avenues believed the Director threatened all that they understood Four Avenues as standing for and embodying—participatory democracy, student freedom, informal relationships and so on.

Chapter 6 further has shown how the differences between Hagley Community College and Four Avenues were intensified in 1993 by Hagley’s intervention in the conflict at Four Avenues between the Director and other staff members. It has argued the disharmony between Hagley and Four Avenues was intensified because Hagley framed the conflict between the Director and staff at Four Avenues exclusively in terms of Four Avenues' refusal to recognise the Director's authority. Chapter 6 has shown how this framing angered many at Four Avenues, leading them to express their views and fears over the Director to the media, because they believed they were not being listened to or taken seriously by Hagley.

Chapter 6 has shown how Hagley Community College believed a rapprochement between Four Avenues and its Board of Trustees was realistic. The final part of chapter 6 has looked at what led Hagley to abandon this hope and sever all ties with Four Avenues (Education Review Office, 1993: 2). It suggests three developments led to this. First, in trying to assume a greater role in the running of Four Avenues, Hagley was frustrated that its efforts to do this were “ignored and actively thwarted” by people at Four Avenues (Principal, 1993: 7). Next, Hagley severed its ties with Four Avenues because the members of its own Board were the target of the same kind of personal invective that was aimed in Four Avenues at the Director. Thirdly, Hagley ended its relationship with Four Avenues because getting directly involved in the school proved to be a time-consuming, expensive and largely ineffectual intervention for its own Board. Trying to take control of Four Avenues, and resolve the problems within it, meant the Hagley Board had little time left for the affairs of Hagley Community College.

Lacking therefore a school in Christchurch willing to accept attachment with Four Avenues, the Ministry of Education accepted the recommendation of Education Review Office (1993) and closed Four Avenues.

With the discussion of this turning point in Four Avenues' history done, this thesis comes to the end of its history of Four Avenues from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s. The following chapter summarises the history of Four Avenues provided in the last four chapters and links it to the research question that has been the focus of this thesis: how Four Avenues' maintained a place in the state education system for 18 years and how its place in that system was threatened at different times in its history.

## CHAPTER VII

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### *Conclusion*

#### *Introduction*

This thesis began by talking of Four Avenues as a hope. Four Avenues embodied the hope that what it offered in terms of schooling would be a portent of fundamental change in the education system, making formal education less important as children and adults alike caught on to the possibilities of informal, self-directed learning outside the context of an institution. The last four chapters of this thesis have provided a history of how the hope of Four Avenues originated, was institutionally sustained for 18 years—in spite of efforts to close the school down—and of how it ended with Four Avenues' closure in 1993. By discussing three turning points in Four Avenues' history, this thesis has addressed the question of how Four Avenues' place in the education system was maintained and threatened for 18 years. In other words, how did Four Avenues endure in the New Zealand education system? Moreover, how was its capacity to endure in that system threatened? This conclusion gathers up the material and the discussion of Four Avenues provided thus far and summarises it under the rubric of these two questions. Or, the more general question of how Four Avenues' place in the education system was maintained and threatened over time. Chapter 7 highlights three features of Four Avenues' history which have been discussed extensively in the preceding chapters—the school's relationship to wider political events and circumstances, its relationship to Hagley High School, and its philosophy and identity—and it looks at how they both helped to maintain and threaten Four Avenues' place in the state system.

#### *Wider Political Events*

This thesis has shown Four Avenues survived for 18 years because two major turning points in its history—its establishment in the state education system in 1975 and the decision of the Department of Education to close it in 1983—coincided with political circumstances and



events that proved advantageous to the school. First, the efforts of the Chippenham community in the early 1970s to establish Four Avenues were aided by the political term of the Third Labour Government from 1972 to 1975. Four Avenues' establishment coincided with a Labour government that was reformist in outlook and that worked with a sense of urgency to implement major systemic changes in New Zealand's public sector (Bassett, 1976: 325). When it came to education, Labour pledged in its 1972 election manifesto to expand community-based learning. It did this by assisting schools like Hagley High School in Christchurch to develop second-chance education programmes for mature students and it allowed the establishment of public and private alternative schools and community colleges right throughout New Zealand (Bassett, 1976: 31-32). The establishment of alternative high schools like Four Avenues and Auckland Metropolitan College was a part of this wider governmental policy. The establishment of Four Avenues was described by Phil Amos (the Third Labour Government's Minister of Education) as "a milestone" in his government's efforts to innovate in education and provide more equality of opportunity (Education Reporter, 1975: 2).

Chippenham was also helped by the support of Phil Amos in establishing Four Avenues. Amos' previous teaching experience made him well-disposed towards the kind of education Chippenham wanted to provide through Four Avenues. Amos had spent over thirty years in the education sector as a teacher in small rural, Maori and intermediate schools. He believed much of the disaffection teenagers experienced in conventional high schools was because the schooling system generally had failed to adapt to rapid social change. In addition, he read widely and sympathetically in the educational literature of the 1960s and 1970s (Bassett, 1976: 219). When Chippenham approached Amos about establishing Four Avenues, he was already familiar with the Parkway Program on which it was modelled and believed similar programmes could be developed in New Zealand and adapted to local conditions to make education relevant to life beyond school. With the injection of new ideas into the education system, Amos publicly claimed, schools avoided fossilisation and irrelevancy (Phil Amos, as quoted in Education Reporter, 1975: 2).

Moving forward in time, the concerted efforts of members in the Four Avenues community to keep their school open in 1984 were similarly aided by the fact that they coincided with the lead-up to the July 1984 general election and the election of the Fourth Labour Government. Members of Four Avenues were fortunate insofar as their efforts to resist the Department of Education's decision to close their school were caught up in Labour's larger strategy of

gaining support from teachers' unions and educational professionals in the lead-up to the 1984 election. Without a change of government in July 1984, and immediate action on the part of the Labour Minister of Education in directing funding at Four Avenues, it is questionable whether Hagley High School would have continued to actively support Four Avenues beyond 1984, especially since it was receiving no funding or money for doing so. The general election in 1984 did not transpire differently, so we can only speculate, but Hagley's support of Four Avenues coincided with the immanent expectation of an election result that would quickly relieve it of responsibility for carrying Four Avenues. If Merv Wellington, the National Minister of Education from 1978 to 1984, had taken immediate action to close Four Avenues after the re-election of the Third National Government in 1981, the Hagley Board of Governors may have been less forthcoming in supporting Four Avenues, for they would have had the prospect of sustaining Four Avenues without funding for over two years. As events turned out in 1984, Hagley only needed to support Four Avenues for less than six months, because the general election that was scheduled at the end of 1984 happened in July 1984, after Robert Muldoon called a hasty “snap election.” Although this is conjecture, it shows how Four Avenues' survival as an independent state school<sup>46</sup> for the next ten years was to a large extent contingent on a particular combination of political circumstances and events going favourably for Four Avenues in 1984.

Four Avenues' dependence on favourable political circumstances for much of its ability to survive, nonetheless, had an inverse side: the school's dependence on them throughout its history contributed to much of its vulnerability as an organisation. The framework of the Education Act 1964 was not designed or passed with intent of establishing a school such as Four Avenues. The stipulation of the Act that a school function as an *in loco parentis* for students was in conflict with Four Avenues' original philosophy, where students would individually go out into the community and do their learning. However, an anomaly in Education Act 1964 meant Four Avenues could be legally established at the discretion of the Minister of Education as an attached unit of an existing high school. This anomaly meant Phil Amos in the 1970s had the capacity to establish Four Avenues, and persuade an initially reluctant Hagley High School Board of Governors into accepting attachment with Four Avenues. While this degree of ministerial discretion proved valuable to Four Avenues in 1975, it meant that as time went on Four Avenues had little of an institutional foothold in the New Zealand education system. For funding and a continued place in the education system, it

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<sup>46</sup>The clause “as an independent state school” is an important qualification, for Four Avenues may have become a private alternative school like Tamarki or Discovery One in Christchurch if events had transpired differently.

was largely dependent in its 18 year history on the goodwill of whatever government happened to be power. When this goodwill did not exist, funding and resources for Four Avenues were withdrawn almost with impunity. The transition between the Third National Government and the Fourth Labour Government in 1984 illustrates this. At the end of 1983, the Minister of Education withdrew state funding from Four Avenues and sold off its premises to a private property developer, making Four Avenues dependent on the support of Hagley High School. The Minister was unable to close Four Avenues because it was technically not a school but a department of Hagley—he could not close “part of a school.” Since Four Avenues, however, was a programme established by direct ministerial authority, the Minister was still able to withhold funding, in the expectation Four Avenues would disappear for lack resources. The election of the Fourth Labour Government in July 1984 shows just how quickly the right set of political circumstances, and the presence of a Minister of Education well-disposed towards alternative education, could reverse Four Avenues' fortunes. Almost immediately after becoming Minister of Education, Russell Marshall made a grant of \$2635 to Four Avenues to offset some of the costs that staff and parents at Four Avenues had incurred in privately running their school (Anonymous, 1984c). In addition, the 1984 Budget provided Four Avenues with \$140,000 so that it could re-establish itself as a state school again (Anonymous, 1984d). What this transition shows is that Four Avenues' ability to remain a part of the state education system was dependent on political conditions working in its favour. When they were not in its favour, Four Avenues' ability to remain a part of the education system was threatened.

### ***Hagley High School/Hagley Community College***

Hagley High School played an important and crucial role in enabling Four Avenues' to remain in the state education system. Four Avenues would not have opened in 1975 if the Hagley Board of Governors had not been willing to accept the Chippenham proposal as part of Hagley High School. Also, when Four Avenues was closed by the Department of Education at the end of 1983, it was Hagley's support that enabled Four Avenues to continue operating in 1984. Nevertheless, the “historic good relationship” between the two schools was not as amicable or as close as was sometimes portrayed. The analysis of correspondence between the Hagley Board of Governors and Department of Education in chapter 4 showed how reluctant Hagley was to become involved in Four Avenues in the mid-1970s. Yet an agreement

between the two schools was reached at the time of Four Avenues' establishment, which effectively integrated the interests of both parties. In this agreement, the Chippenham community got what it wanted: independence for Four Avenues in managing its own affairs and developing its own programmes. The Hagley Board also achieved its ends: the freedom to concentrate on what happened in Hagley High School without worrying too much about what was going on Four Avenues. Four Avenues was directly funded by the Department of Education and more or less treated as a separate institution. For 18 years, Four Avenues was legally Hagley High School; yet essentially, it was a separate organisation Hagley had little responsibility in managing.

It was the organisational and institutional separateness between the two schools that contributed to their good working relationship over time. When Four Avenues faced closure by the Minister of Education in 1983, it was able to claim it was part of Hagley High School, and therefore, that it could not be closed without fully closing Hagley too. However, when closure was no longer a threat for Four Avenues, both schools more or less reconstituted the relationship that existed between them before and continued it until the early 1990s. This thesis has shown that as long as practical organisational separateness existed between Four Avenues and Hagley then Four Avenues' position in the state education system was relatively secure, and its relationship with Hagley experienced few problems. Yet when this situation was changed, Four Avenues and Hagley experienced conflict.

Two incidents in Four Avenues' history substantiate this claim. First, when Four Avenues had its funding withdrawn at the end of 1983, to survive it had to develop a closer working relationship with Hagley. Doing this, however, created conflict. Some of the teaching staff in Hagley High School resented that teachers from Four Avenues had a smaller student-to-teacher ratio than they did. Differences like this suggest, therefore, the relationship between Four Avenues and Hagley experienced few problems as long as a certain degree of organisational distance or space existed between them.

If this space was not maintained, however, then conflict seemed to follow almost as a matter of course. In the fallout between Hagley and Four Avenues discussed in chapter 6, this was especially evident. In the early 1990s, Hagley tried to assume more responsibility for Four Avenues through negotiating a new attachment arrangement and dismissing the Four Avenues committee of management in June 1993. Yet what the Hagley Board in the early 1990s failed to fully understand was that their historic attachment with Four Avenues (which they saw as

“unaccountable”) was a relationship that effectively institutionalised the interests of both schools. Four Avenues had independence, and Hagley had the freedom to concentrate on matters in Hagley. As the Hagley Board of Governors anticipated in the mid-1970s, trying to directly manage Four Avenues *and* Hagley was a time-consuming and expensive exercise for the Hagley Board of Trustees. Inevitably, matters relating to Hagley Community College were neglected by the Board as they ineffectually tried to gain control over what went on at Four Avenues. Hence, as long as institutional space existed between Four Avenues and Hagley, few problems developed in their relationship and Four Avenues' position in the education system was relatively secure.

To recapitulate all of this in the light of the material in the previous chapters: in hindsight, the attachment agreement thrashed out by Four Avenues, the Department of Education and the Hagley Board of Governors in the mid-1970s was a brilliant piece of negotiation. It enshrined the interests of both Four Avenues and Hagley High School. Four Avenues was attached to Hagley for legal purposes. It gained the freedom and autonomy to manage its own affairs and implement the educational philosophy it wanted to. The Hagley Board of Governors, on the other hand, were largely free of responsibility for Four Avenues in this arrangement, and they had the freedom to focus on managing Hagley High School, because their “attached unit” was more or less autonomous as an organisation. As chapter 6 showed, it was the ending of this long-standing arrangement with a balance of different interests that threatened Four Avenues' survival and contributed to its closure. For many of the points of contention between Hagley Community College and Four Avenues in 1990s were the same as those worked out in the initial attachment agreement in the mid-1970s.

### ***Philosophy***

Four Avenues' long-term survival in the education system was both aided and threatened by its relationships with wider political circumstances and Hagley High School/later Hagley Community College. However, the discussion of this thesis has shown how developments within Four Avenues both contributed to and threatened Four Avenues' place in the state education system. The second part of this chapter summarises how one of these developments did this over time: Four Avenues' philosophy.

Four Avenues' establishment in 1975 was timely in the sense that it reflected a turn in much Anglo-American educational writing and theorising towards the expressive individualism of the 1960s and 1970s. The work of A. S. Neill (1968) in Great Britain (who had been writing and promoting his ideas since the 1920s) and John Holt (1969) and Herbert Kohl (1969) in the United States contributed enormously to this turn. They discouraged teacher-centred methods in the classroom in favour of child-centred approaches that emphasised voluntaristic models of learning (Milbank, 2003: 38). Under the influence of authors like Rogers (1969) and Postman and Weingartner (1969), emphasis was also placed on “non-directive” learning and the creative potential of each child. The key to effective learning, they argued, lay not in the internalisation of prevalent social norms, but rather in freedom from them. The concept of socialisation increasingly came to be viewed not as an ideal, but as the original sin of society against the uniqueness and personality of each child.

The Parkway Program, the educational programme in Philadelphia United States on which Four Avenues was originally patterned, reflected this renewed interest in the early 1970s in voluntaristic models of childhood learning. As the original Chippenham community proposal put it: “Our social and physical environment is a network of learning resources ... sale yards, factories, shops, libraries, rivers, weather, insects ... and within this environment there are people who have skills they can impart to students simply by demonstration” (Chippenham Committee, No Date: 5, ellipses original). At the time of Four Avenues' establishment, teenagers were required to define their own programme of study and find the resources and the people that would help them to learn. However, the kinds of students who enrolled in Four Avenues at the start typically did not match the kinds of students the authors of the Chippenham community proposal envisaged the school as catering for. Rather than the envisaged “self-directed and mature” student, those who were attracted to Four Avenues were “mainly the unhappy, the deprived or the failing” (Mellon, 1978: 9). Or, as the Department of Education inspectorate put it in 1976, the “depressed or unstable, truant, delinquent, underachieving, lacking in competence or had been expelled from the previous school” (Department of Education, 1979: 3).

Four Avenues did not generally attract the kinds of students it initially saw itself as providing for. To use the imagery of this thesis, the inability to attract sufficient numbers of a type of student in the 1970s was in addition to the three turning points covered in this thesis the first major “crisis” in Four Avenues' history. Without a large number of “self-directed and mature” students enrolling, what justified the continued place of Four Avenues in the state education

system? It was questions like this that exercised the attention of coordinators at Four Avenues from the mid-to-late 1970s. In this connection, Four Avenues' coordinators helped to ensure the continued survival of Four Avenues by redefining certain aspects of the school's philosophy and programme. They did this by increasingly conceiving of Four Avenues as an “extended family” or “therapeutic community” rather than a “school without walls.” This emphasis they spoke of as a natural evolution rather than a change in Four Avenues' philosophy:

Four Avenues *could not help but evolve* as a community in its own right even though this was not initially one of its main aims. Thus, it became very clear in practice that the main learning resource was not “the community” but rather people—fellow students and staff. The school as a community has become as important as the outside community (Four Avenues School, 1977, italics added).

This re-conceptualisation of the philosophy of Four Avenues helped to ensure the continued survival of Four Avenues in the state education system. It helped coordinators in working with the kinds of students they found in their school everyday. Nevertheless, this re-conceptualisation was not without problems. It raised the question, especially for the Department of Education, of whether the continued presence of Four Avenues was indeed necessary. The Department of Education cared little about the details of Four Avenues' reorientation in philosophy, but it was concerned this had implications when it came to funding. An argument in favour of establishing Four Avenues in 1975 was that less funding and resources (or at worst, an equivalent amount of funding and resources) would be required to educate a student at Four Avenues compared to mainstream high schools. The Department raised the issue of whether the continued presence of Four Avenues in the state education system was really justified, especially since Four Avenues was competing for a limited amount of funding with other schools, duplicating many of their courses and programmes, and having at best ambiguous success in doing that. Was it not preferable and more economical to direct funding and resources into established high schools that had more of a proven record and a more recognised criteria of academic success? Was it worthwhile investing in an experimental programme that seemed to primarily exist for the sake of its *difference* from other secondary schools? These were the kinds of issues Four Avenues' change in philosophy raised. Therefore, a reorientation in philosophy helped Four Avenues in dealing with a crisis in its early years. Nonetheless, this reorientation raised a question that continued to surround Four Avenues until the election of the Fourth Labour Government in 1984: whether its place

in the state education system was necessary.

The commitment of coordinators and many students and their parents to Four Avenues' distinctive philosophy helped to ensure the survival of Four Avenues for 18 years. Many at Four Avenues had a negative view of other state schools and believed the mechanisms of discipline in mainstream secondary schools were psychologically harmful and repressive. Whether or not this understanding of other schools was accurate is beside the point. What it provided many at Four Avenues with was a powerful myth and motivation for fighting for the continuation of their school in the education system; no matter what the odds or the cost. For many at Four Avenues genuinely believed in the inherent motivation of all students and the superiority of highly voluntarist models of learning. Moreover, it was the perception that mainstream high schools failed to meet the needs of students as *individuals* that justified the continuation of Four Avenues. This is one of the reasons coordinators, parents and students at Four Avenues often displayed great determination over the years in fighting for the continuation of their school over the years, in spite of intermittent threats to close it. Four Avenues, they believed, catered for human needs in a way larger high schools did not. The development at Four Avenues of many students other schools considered failures show this perception was often well-founded.

A high level of commitment on the part of many members of Four Avenues to their school's philosophy provided Four Avenues with a high degree of resilience as an organisation over 18 years. It made many at Four Avenues willing to fight for the continuation of their school and the ideals they saw it as embodying. While this high level of ideological commitment on part of many at Four Avenues contributed to the school's relative longevity, it also at times threatened the survival of Avenues. This was especially the case when the Director challenged many of the dominant assumptions and practices at Four Avenues. This happened in the early 1980s when Graham Mundy, the Director of Four Avenues from 1980 to 1984, disagreed with other staff members over the direction Four Avenues was taking and the form of education it was providing (or failing to provide) students. Partly, he relinquished his role as Director out of a sense of frustration at unsuccessfully trying to implement “a rational middle point” between a “very liberal education” and “a core curriculum” (interview, 9 October 2002).

This happened too in the early 1990s in a much more dramatic and protracted form when Four Avenues' last Director tried to implement wide-ranging changes in Four Avenues' philosophy and methods of teaching. The Director in the early 1990s was the object of many accusations



at Four Avenues. She was accused of having “no philosophy of education to speak of”; she was accused of selfishness; and of using Four Avenues simply as a means of career advancement (Coordinator, 1993a). Furthermore, she was accused of autocratic leadership and not consulting the wider Four Avenues community (Parent at Four Avenues, 1993a). The Director at Four Avenues was an object of loathing and contempt by many in the early 1990s.

The Director was the focus of loathing and contempt at this time because she was highly critical of the voluntaristic model of student learning that dominated Four Avenues' pedagogy. To her, it was an ineffective, *laissez faire* approach to education that wasted resources and hindered student achievement. In the place of this model, the Director wanted Four Avenues to focus on providing intensive programmes for “at risk” young people. This was a category of student, she believed, that was little catered for in other Christchurch high schools. This proposal along with the Director's efforts to implement it provoked a strong response from many at Four Avenues. One person accused the Director of intending to do away with Four Avenues' philosophy and “democracy,” replacing it with an autocratic organisation she controlled (Coordinator at Four Avenues, 1993b). He also accused her of filling Four Avenues with “at risk” young people and excluding the “true alternative learner” from Four Avenues, as well a whole range of students who had less noticeable problems in school—unhappiness, shyness, a lack of social confidence, poor performance (Coordinator at Four Avenues, 1993b). The Director was accused of deliberately conspiring to turn interested students away from Four Avenues who were not deemed or categorised as sufficiently “at risk.” As the last chapter suggested, it is questionable whether the Director really intended to do all of this in the early 1990s. Nevertheless, this is what some at Four Avenues interpreted her attempts to move their school in a particular direction as intimating.

Like Graham Mundy a decade earlier, the Director, in trying to implement changes at Four Avenues in 1993, encountered opposition from individuals who were strongly committed to a particular understanding of Four Avenues' philosophy. As noted above, it was the strong commitment to a particular understanding of Four Avenues' philosophy on the part of coordinators, students and parents that provided Four Avenues with much of its resilience in the state education system for 18 years. Yet this high level of commitment was also a source of division and conflict within Four Avenues, especially when this understanding encountered opposition or criticism. Along with helping to ensure the survival of Four Avenues, it had the potential to divide staff within the school. The determination of individuals to preserve what they saw as the ethos of Four Avenues along with the Director's equal determination to oppose

it produced the situation in the early 1990s where Four Avenues was pulled in two opposing directions and made unworkable as an organisation in the process. The Director had the full support of Hagley Community College, but this countered for little when she was faced with the opposition of many at Four Avenues. The reason the conflict between Graham Mundy and other staff members at Four Avenues did not assume wider proportions was that Graham Mundy left Four Avenues in frustration over the resistance he encountered. A decade later, however, the Director was determined to counter opposition and see through the changes at Four Avenues that she felt were necessary to its long-term survival.

The Director's disparagement of Four Avenues' educational philosophy as the “‘free choice’ mentality of some of our so-called ‘alternatives’” also did little to endear her to many coordinators at Four Avenues (Director, 1993). However, to blame her for the closure of Four Avenues in 1993 is to give too much credence to the accusations against her. On the part of those who vehemently opposed her, there was an equal disparagement of her suggestion that Four Avenues needed to change if it was to remain in the state education system and have a continuing relationship with Hagley Community College. One of the major issues at stake for those who opposed the Director was Four Avenues' identity as an *alternative* in the education system. The changes the Director and the Hagley Board wanted to see signalled the virtual elimination of that identity in the minds of many individuals at Four Avenues. Four Avenues would become the kind of mainstream high school that they feared and loathed; it would become the mainstream “other,” the pedagogical alterity many at Four Avenues had historically defined their school in opposition to. Hence, the strong sense of what Four Avenues' identity consisted in was what made Four Avenues' place in the state education simultaneously stable and unstable over time. Over the years, it both threatened and helped to ensure Four Avenues' survival. Ultimately, however, this strong sense of identity led to the school's closure.

This thesis has spoken of Four Avenues as embodying the hope that it would provide a form of education that was qualitatively different from other state high schools. For 18 years, Four Avenues succeeded in doing that, in spite of the modifications over time in the understanding of what this qualitative dissimilarity from other schools consisted of. It was the fear on the part of many at Four Avenues that their school would no longer sustain this qualitative difference under the changes the Director and Hagley wanted to introduce in the early 1990s that led to the internecine conflicts within Four Avenues and the school's eventual demise in 1993.

## ***Conclusion***

This conclusion has returned to the problem raised in the introductory chapter of this thesis: how Four Avenues' place in the education system was maintained and threatened for 18 years. For purposes of summary, this chapter has framed that problem in terms of how Four Avenues' place in the education system was maintained and threatened over time. In framing the problem in this way, this conclusion has highlighted three features of Four Avenues' history that have been discussed extensively in the preceding chapters: Four Avenues' relationship to wider political events and circumstances, Four Avenues' relationship to Hagley High School, and issues surrounding Four Avenues' philosophy and identity. This chapter has concluded, first, Four Avenues' ability to survive in the education system for 18-years was aided by the fact that political events and circumstances were often favourable towards it. Four Avenues started in 1975 because of a Labour government and Minister of Education that were favourable to its *establishment*. Four Avenues was also *re-established* in the mid-1980s because of the election of a Labour government and Minister of Education favourable to it. Yet Four Avenues' dependence on favourable political circumstances made it vulnerable in the sense that it was largely dependent throughout its history on the goodwill of whatever government happened to be in power.

Second, this chapter has shown that Hagley High School/Hagley Community College played an important and crucial role in Four Avenues' remaining in the education system for 18 years. The school would not have opened in 1975 if the Hagley Board of Governors had not been willing to accept the Chippenham proposal as part of Hagley. Moreover, Hagley's support enabled Four Avenues to continue operating as a school in 1984. This thesis has shown that Hagley was beneficial to Four Avenues as long as *organisational separateness* practically existed between the two schools. Yet when this situation changed at two points in Four Avenues' history, the goodwill and mutual support between the two schools was not as extensive as media portrayals often suggested.

Thirdly, this thesis has shown the high level of commitment on the part of many members of Four Avenues to their school's philosophy (or at least, a particular understanding of it) provided Four Avenues with a high degree of resilience as an organisation over 18 years. It made many at Four Avenues willing to fight for the continuation of their school and the ideals they felt it embodied. Nevertheless, this high level of ideological commitment also

threatened the survival of Four Avenues. This happened in the early 1990s where the readiness of many to defend their understanding of Four Avenues' identity in the face of what they saw as challenges to it from the Director and Hagley Community College led to the school's eventual closure. Four Avenues was a pedagogical hope of a continuing alternative to and challenge of the “mainstream” in the state education system, this thesis has concluded; and it was a hope that was often precariously sustained for 18 years. It was the fear this pedagogical difference would no longer continue under the changes the Director and Hagley Community wanted to implement at Four Avenues that led to the school's closure in 1993.

## **APPENDIX**

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### *Information Sheet and Consent form for Interview Participants*

**University of Canterbury**

**Department of Sociology and Anthropology**

#### **INFORMATION**

You are invited to participate as a subject in the research project on Four Avenues School.

The aim of this project is to study the history of the school, looking at the reasons for how it became a part of the Christchurch educational scene and why it closed in 1993.

Your involvement in this project will involve participating in a one-on-one semi-structured interview of around 50 minutes. This interview will be audio taped and transcribed into written text. You have the right to withdraw from the project at any time, including withdrawal of any information provided.

As a follow-up to this investigation, you will have the opportunity to view a transcript of your interview and suggest any changes or modifications to what you have said before your contribution is incorporated into the project. Furthermore, before the project is submitted, you will be provided with the opportunity to read where you are quoted in it and suggest any changes.

The results of the project will be published as an M. A. thesis. A copy will be available at the Central Library, University of Canterbury and the public at the Central Branch of the Canterbury Public Library. It may be of interest to those interested in Christchurch history or alternative schooling in New

Zealand. You may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation: the identity of participants will not be published without their consent. The anonymity of former students will be maintained. However, because of the public nature of their professional role, former staff members when quoted or referred to in the project will be identified with their consent.

The project is being carried out in partial fulfilment of a Master of Arts by Paul Whiting under the supervision of Arnold Parr and Lyndon Fraser who can be contacted at [a.parr@soci.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:a.parr@soci.canterbury.ac.nz) and [l.fraser@soci.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:l.fraser@soci.canterbury.ac.nz). They will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in the project.

The project has been reviewed *and approved* by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee.

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*Paul Whiting*

*C/o Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Canterbury*

*25 June 2002*

## ***Consent Form for Former Staff***

### *Four Avenues Project*

I have read and understood the description of the above-named project. On this basis, I agree to participate as a subject in the project, and I consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that confidentiality of information will be preserved.

I understand also that I may at any time withdraw from the project, including withdrawal of any information I have provided.

NAME (please print): .....

Signature:

Date:

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