

Despite all its flaws, I heartily recommend this book to all students of the history of childhood because it raises, intentionally or not, the questions that must be addressed both professionally as practitioners and intellectually as members of a community of discourse. The questions require empirical and conceptual investigations. We will not establish the truth but we should be able to clean up some muddy thinking and sloppy uses of evidence.

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Wilson, J. Donald (Eds.). *An Imperfect Past: Education and Society in Canadian History*. Vancouver: Centre for the Study of Curriculum and Instruction, University of British Columbia, 1984, 218 pp., \$10.00.

One would like to express some enthusiasm for a new publication in the field of Canadian educational history, such material being in short supply. But this particular volume serves little purpose at this time, save as a reminder to the participants of a few pleasant days spent at the West Coast in 1983. It is difficult to see Wilson's volume being used as a classroom textbook: the papers are much too limited in scope to hold the interest of the average university undergraduate. Physically, the book is neither attractive nor sturdy: the binding cannot stand much handling and the printed page is not kind to the eye. And why this fixation on long-winded titles? Can we not have something quite ordinary and straight-forward, such as Simon does with his, "Can Education Change Society?" Wilson's "Introduction" is not all that helpful either. Why a repetitive preview of each paper, as if the reader brings no background whatever to these essays? Let us get one thing clear at the outset: this book will be read only by those already in the discipline, even though the editor holds out much greater promise for it.

The finest work in the collection, head and shoulders above the others, is the wide-ranging essay prepared by Brian Simon of Leicester University, the only non-Canadian contributor. It should, of course, have been presented first. But the book's editor choose to place his own "Observations on Recent Trends" at the outset. The first few pages in Wilson's essay are merely a review of material which has upon occasion appeared elsewhere. Of real value here is Wilson's telling critique of the social control thesis — so popular during the 1970's — using appropriate examples from the British Columbian historical experience to denigrate the overwhelming Nineteenth Century educational bureaucracy. What is occurring, Wilson points out, is that interest has been moving away from politically tinged questions within the context of social history, to those with emphasis on "family strategies," as Wilson defines this category, and other related sub-fields. Wilson does serve his readership well in directing attention to where more work needs to be done in the history of education. The educational dimensions within working class history and intellectual history, for example, are not yet fully developed, he finds. Simon's reminder in the essay to follow, of "massive educational advances... in the tertiary sector" (p. 32) has, as well, stimulated educational historians to explore these roots. Sadly, none of the other essays in Wilson's new book seem to match the criteria for relevance which he himself has established.

Simon's essay, although somewhat out of place in this book, is important for the optimistic possibilities for social change imbedded in his analysis. He leads the reader on to a clear demonstration of man's capacity for movement, for acting on the environment, transforming it," (p. 46) all of which becomes, for the participating person, an educative experience. What an excellent point to commence looking at events in the history of education! Simon then seconds Wilson's earlier attack against the social control thesis. It is schooling which gives the learner a "modern outlook," the scientific, objective view of reality, dispelling "magic and superstition." With this grasp of reality, man, Simon reminds us, can bring about change in the environment and within himself. Simon closes by calling on his listeners and readers to recognize and rise to the potential which education offers. As one can see, this call for action does not fit comfortably with those papers of a more commonplace nature yet to follow.

In considering the content essays found within this book there are four worth describing in some depth.

James Love's "Anti-American Ideology and Education Reform in 19th Century Upper Canada," adds no new or significant interpretation of ideological perspectives in its view of Upper Canada. His debatable claim

is that anti-Americanism, firmly rooted after the Revolutions of 1837, was the "single most important element" in the thought pantheon of the leaders of Upper Canada. We are well aware that this misanthropic view affected many decisions made about schools in Upper Canada, especially in the area of curriculum, as has been pointed out in other fine work done by James Love himself and by Bruce Curtis. Yet, Love reminds us, this ideology could never be appropriate or lasting, for it failed to develop an indigenous appreciation of just what value system would be fitting, given the time and place. This essay was helpful, nonetheless, in exploring further this important if overworked dimension of Upper Canadian society.

Juliet Pollard's "Growing up Metis" is another essay worth reading. It contains some fascinating insights into the lifestyle of West Coast Metis in the early years of the Nineteenth Century. Pollard gives us a closer look at one community of the time, Fort Vancouver, established in 1824. By 1832 a school was being taught at the factory by a New Hampshire master. It was free and non-sectarian. Although, as Pollard reports, a number of Metis boys were given the opportunity to undertake further studies beyond the world of the Fort, it was really the girls who were provided with an opportunity for education. They were their father's chief resource: through a suitable marriage, social and economic prospects could brighten. On the other hand, many trading fathers worried over their sons, fearing that an "Indian disposition" in them would ruin any opportunity for advancement with the Company. Thus, the importance of some education, at least, for the boys as well.

Pollard's essay contains considerable information of interest on this coastal Metis culture. She concludes by showing us just how effective the impact of racial discrimination was for these people. They became painfully aware of their secondary status, at times challenging rather than accepting the assessment placed upon them by the dominant, white culture. Yet, over time, they lost their uniqueness, suffering the fate of Metis elsewhere throughout the West.

F.H. Armstrong's paper, "John Strachan, Schoolmaster, and the Evolution of the Elite in Upper Canada/Ontario," provides us with something of the usual review of this famous educator's career. What Armstrong does accomplish is to document clearly something which students of history have been perfectly familiar with: Dr. Strachan's ongoing influence in Upper Canada. This was garnered reflectively from prominent leaders of Upper Canada who had once been his students. In his own *Letterbook*, Strachan records his growing influence in that society for this very reason. Armstrong's repetition of the obvious in this paper is not what makes the essay useful. What he does do is to verify that Strachan's vision and ideals for that society had a much more lasting influence in Upper Canada and Ontario than is sometimes believed. It is often held that Strachan's influence deteriorated rapidly with the arrival of responsible government in the late 1840's. Contrarily, many of his young men remained at the centre of political power for many more years. The final essay worth pointing out is "L'enseignement menager et les "home economics" au Quebec et en Ontario...." by Marta Danylewycz et al. This combined work is important because it presents a comprehensive view of a little known curriculum area during the first fifty years of the Twentieth Century. Although we are told that the development of household science grew out of a "common vision of the woman," there were differences that evolved between these two major provinces and among the various school systems therein.

In Quebec, for example, there was a tendency to use Domestic Science as a necessary preparation for girls to assume their roles as rural wives and mothers, if one focuses on the Roman Catholic Public System; or as guardians of the traditions of Church and home in the Franco-Catholic private schools. The Anglo-Protestant approach in Quebec, closer to that taken in Ontario, saw Domestic Science assuming a slightly more professional status, as was occurring in the Northern United States. Differences show up among all of the various school systems studied as to the time devoted to this subject, and the facilities and resources committed to Domestic Science. One is led to see that, in both provinces, great discrepancies appeared between rural and urban areas as far as opportunities to engage the subject were concerned.

Ontario became a leader in the development of Domestic Science studies. It was there that Mrs. Hoodless so vigorously championed the cause. As well, Ontario's centralized system enabled that province to provide the program more uniformly. Yet, in both provinces, the school curriculum was revised, not without opposition, to make room for the addition of this new course of study, thereby reducing the academic component in the process.

The remaining essays found in this volume do not add significantly to our knowledge of the history of education in Canada. Lyon's look at the "Fellowship of the Maple Leaf," a quaint, Church of England attempt to save the West from foreign takeover, had only a fleeting existence and minimal impact upon events

as they unfolded on the prairies. Anglo-Saxon superiority was demonstrated more vividly by countless other organizations at the time.

All things considered, one can only say that this particular publication does little to advance knowledge and certainly evokes little enthusiasm or interest in new fields of historical research.

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