

## BOOK REVIEWS

Bercuson, D., and Wertheimer, D.A., *A Trust Betrayed: The Keegstra Affair*, Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1985, 241 pp., \$19.95 (hardcover).

The Jewish conspiracy is central to Jim Keegstra's life. He believes, and has believed for a long time, that this conspiracy is running the world and making the important day-to-day decisions about what people will do and what they will think. He believes that the conspiracy has come close to achieving its purposes: world domination and the suppression and eventual destruction of Christianity . . . He is convinced that the conspiracy has succeeded in hiding itself by manufacturing the history which is written by scholars in its employ and which is, therefore, taught in schools and universities and contained in library shelves (p. 44).

So write the authors about the notorious small-town Prairie motor mechanic, former teacher, and former mayor of Eckville, Alberta. For approximately a decade Jim Keegstra was able to get away with his efforts to indoctrinate students at Eckville High School with hatred against not only Jews, but Catholics, Blacks, and Communists, among others. The authors, David Bercuson, a writer and historian who teaches at the University of Calgary, and Douglas Wertheimer, the editor and publisher of *The Jewish Star*, a bi-weekly Calgary-based publication, try to uncover for themselves and us why Keegstra taught what he taught and why he was able to do so for as long as he did. The strength of the book lies in the efforts of the authors to uncover the sources of Keegstra's belief system, and in their systematic tracing of the process by which Lacombe County School Board finally became aware of the implications of Keegstra's teaching and decided to take action against him. The authors also follow the process by which the media, the Jewish community, and the broader community became aware of Keegstra, and the turning of the Keegstra "affair" and the town of Eckville into an international media event. They discuss the events leading up to the decision by Attorney General Crawford to charge Keegstra with promoting hatred and they briefly discuss the preliminary hearing and the subsequent trial in April 1985.

The authors trace Keegstra's anti-semitism to his Social Credit roots and the anti-semitic writings of the British engineer, C.H. Douglas (whose ideas spawned the Social Credit movement in Canada) as well as through extensive reading of anti-semitic tracts which were readily available through mail-order sources in Canada. It is important to realize that the Alberta Social Credit Board, which acted as the propagandist wing of the Party, spewed forth anti-semitic messages in the 1930s and 1940s which were paid for by the Alberta government until Ernest Manning succeeded in ridding the Party of anti-semitic elements in 1947. At the federal level, Norman Jacques from the Alberta Wetaskiwin riding vented his anti-semitic views in the House of Commons during the period 1935-1949. It is also helpful to realize that during the 1930s the government of Canada refused to accept Jewish refugees fleeing from the clutches of the Nazis, a point to which the authors do not draw our attention at this juncture of their book. Bercuson and Wertheimer are particularly anxious to show that the sources of much of the material Keegstra used in his classroom can be traced to medieval writings and beliefs about Jews which can themselves be traced back to the origins of Christianity itself, since Christianity was in part a reaction to Judaism of the day. The medieval writings fanned the flames of nineteenth century racist theories which in turn influenced the rise of Fascism and Nazism of the 1930s. Along with the focus on the Jewish conspiracy to take over the world, Keegstra also taught that the Holocaust was a hoax.

Bercuson and Wertheimer search within the school system, the curriculum, the training of teachers, the decentralization of the Alberta education system, the liberalization of the education system during the 1960s and 1970s, the teachers' association of Alberta, the school and the families and the community to try to understand why Keegstra could continue teaching for as long as he did. A blind eye was turned by two principals and a superintendent when complaints were lodged against Keegstra in the 1970s. Catholic parents who objected to Keegstra's anti-Catholic sentiments complained and in some cases removed their children from his classes. However, it was only at the insistence of a couple of parents, a new superintendent, and some Board of Education members that Keegstra was finally dismissed. Keegstra's dismissal was greeted with dismay by the teachers at Eckville High School and there remained a number of Keegstra supporters within the community at large. The Alberta Teachers' Association supported Keegstra financially in his efforts to defend himself and were slow to condemn him for what he taught or the manner in which he taught. As to Keegstra's colleagues at Eckville High School, it is not clear whether many of them were aware of the content of his

courses. Once a teacher closes the door of his/her classroom, only the students and perhaps a few interested parents ever really know what goes on behind those doors. The teacher is very much in charge of his/her own domain.

To blame the fact that there was a move toward the liberalization of a stultifying education system in the 1960s and 1970s, as the authors are somewhat wont to do, is to flog the wrong horse. On the contrary, as they themselves note on numerous occasions, Keegstra was viewed as an effective teacher and as one who maintained excellent control of his classes. His demeanor, his control, his fascism were not all that terribly out of line with a school system which is strongly concerned with discipline and control in the classroom as a measure of the teacher's effectiveness. No one seemed to be overly concerned with the way in which Keegstra taught or with the structure of the classroom and the isolation of the classroom from the community beyond the schoolyard. The students stated that it was not possible to question Keegstra. They were his captives. They did not know what else to do. They had been well-trained. During the 1960s and 1970s efforts were made in some quarters to break down the emphasis on control, to make structural changes in the system, to bring the school into the community. Students in the Prairies were not so fortunate as to be the beneficiaries of alternative schools and classes.

Few school boards and teachers' associations in this country are adequately dealing with the homophobia, sexism, and racism that are a daily part of the lives of Canadians and Canadian classrooms. *A Trust Betrayed* is an important book because it opens our eyes to how easy it is to teach hatred in the classrooms of our schools. The next step is to take this message seriously and to look at not only the content of the materials we teach but also at structures and styles in which we teach them. The medium, after all, is the message.

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Berkowitz, M.W. and Oser, F., (Eds.). *Moral Education: Theory and Practice*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1985. xi + 454 pp., \$45.00 (hardcover).

As stated by the editors in their preface, the volume is a reflection of the work of Lawrence Kohlberg. The title of the volume should have indicated this. The editors succinctly indicate in the preface that the volume reflects Kohlberg's work in seven predominant ways: (1) It is a presentation of current work from the Kohlberg camp, (2) it presents views of friendly critics, (3) it follows Kohlberg's precept that theory, practice and criticism cannot be separated, (4) the idea of education must be broadly defined and, therefore, presents education in four representative areas: the school, the family, the workplace and clinical-developmental setting, (5) Kohlberg's theory and his approach have always been eclectic; hence, the volume has a multi-disciplinary approach with contributions by philosophers, psychologists, educators and psychotherapists; Kohlberg has always had a particular international orientation; hence, the volume has contributors from the United States, Switzerland, Germany and Israel, areas where the editors say most of the work on Kohlbergian moral education is being done and (7) the volume, as does Kohlberg's work, emphasizes the adolescent.

The volume consists of three parts:

- Part I: *Theoretical Perspectives and Philosophical Foundations*,
- Part II: *Applications and Interventions*,
- Part III: *Critiques and Revisions*

As with many edited books, and, because this book deals primarily with Kohlbergian theory, there is too much reiteration of the theory and explanation of its stages. Some authors write with cohesiveness and clarity, others do not. Some of the material in the volume will be familiar to the reader, e.g. much of what is said by Kohlberg himself, and by Rest and Lickona. What may not be familiar to the reader are the perspectives of two Europeans: Habermas' discourse ethics as discussed by Ofried Hoffe and Eckensberger and Reinshagen's action theory as discussed by Villenave-Cremer and Eckensberger.

Having been trained as a clinical psychologist, I found the section on *Clinical Settings* most interesting, particularly the submission by Alexandra Hewer in which she presents two case studies of adolescent males