

BOOK REVIEWS

IN B.C. HISTORICAL NEWS, 14 no. 2, FALL 1980 p. 25.

SCHOOLING AND SOCIETY IN 20TH CENTURY BRITISH COLUMBIA. Ed. by J. Donald Wilson and David C. Jones. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1980. Pp. 191 \$11.25 (paper).

Schooling and Society is a well-produced collection of six essays based on masters' and doctoral research done at the University of British Columbia. The topics of these essays range quite widely over the history of schooling in the province. Timothy A. Dunn addresses the public school expansion of 1900-1929 while David C. Jones relates educational thought to the ideology of land settlement during the same period. The careers of G.M. Weir and H.B. King are reconsidered by Jean Mann who raises questions about the nature of progressivism and its meaning for schooling in B.C. between the Wars. Three other essays focus on specific topics: Diane L. Matters examines the Boys' Industrial School; Jean Barman analyses the Vernon Preparatory School; and Gillian Weiss explores the debates surrounding the establishment of kindergartens in various areas of the province. In addition to these essays, the volume includes a very useful bibliography prepared by Frances M. Woodward and a stimulating introductory essay by J. Donald Wilson.

The essays are generally written with a good deal of pioneering fervour and the tone of the collection is set by Wilson's introduction. Wilson sees a developmental process at work in the recent writing of Canadian educational history. Over the past fifteen years, Wilson perceives a three-stage progression in which the traditional perspectives of those such as F. Henry Johnson were first replaced by Wilson, Robert M. Stamp and Louis-Phillippe Audet and then by the radical revisionism of Michael Katz. The Schooling and Society essays generally reflect the Katz influence and some authors attempt to advance this context, most notably Jones' emphasis on the "myth of the land". However, none of the essays offers any critique of sources or the kind of systematic analysis germane to recent social historical writing. The general strength of the collection is in its contribution to the history of ideas. All the essays attempt to establish a broader theoretical context for these ideas and it is this fact which supports the claim of innovation.

The one unfortunate aspect of the otherwise exceedingly helpful introduction is Wilson's surprising underestimation of the role which educational historians have played in advancing "mainstream" historical thought during the past fifteen years. Wilson suggests that, in recent years, educational historians have been struggling to catch-up with other Canadian scholars. In fact, it was educational historians who were often responsible for drawing attention to the importance of topics such as the history of ethnicity, labour and women and, thereby, it was they who breathed new life into a sometimes moribund discipline. It is simply not accurate to suggest that educational historians had to learn theory and methodology from their mainstream counterparts; rather, the reverse was generally true. Similarly, Wilson seriously downplays the impact which research on the educational history of Canada has had internationally and he is unnecessarily apologetic about accomplishments to date. While Schooling and Society is in many ways only a tentative first step in terms of the educational history of B.C., its general focus and analyses immediately carry it near the forefront of current historical thinking about the province. The volume should be used both in introductory and upper level university courses and will undoubtedly also attract a more general readership.

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