

Council, Ifor Evans, in 1947. What made his trip so remarkable was not just the fact that he covered some 6,500 miles by boat, bus, and railway in thirty-nine days, and attended 109 meetings with arts groups, government cultural agencies, and arts administrators, but that he made a strong case for the federal government's involvement in the arts. The activities of both the Canadian Committee and the British Council executive alerted Canadians to the idea that government agencies and funds could play a solid and constructive role in the cultural field long before the Massey Commissioners first met in Ottawa in 1949.

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June Purvis. *A History of Women's Education in England.* Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991. Pp. 159.

A History of Women's Education in England concentrates on the period 1800 to 1914, a time of expansion of educational opportunities for girls and women, when increased options were marked by processes of gender differentiation and segregation. Although much of June Purvis' research has been published previously, this present book offers an accessible and attractive synthesis of nineteenth-century trends. Developments in the twentieth century are treated cursorily, a regrettable decision as the title sug-

gests a larger and more comprehensive treatment.

The first chapter considers prescriptions of Victorian domestic ideology which required women to be located in the home as full-time wives and mothers. The next two chapters consider the education of working-class girls and women, the following two are concerned with middle-class females, and the last chapter identifies a couple of themes relevant both in Victorian times and the 1990s.

Purvis' primary sources are prescriptive treatises, autobiographies, government enquiries, and contemporary sociological analyses. She judiciously draws from the increasing bibliography of secondary material, from women's history as well as from studies in the history of education. It would be helpful to have more testimony from women themselves, and it would be useful to see statistics which could establish the numbers and proportions of students in the various schools and institutions. Purvis addresses both qualitative and quantitative questions, but in this short book can do little more than suggest the relationships among and between women schooled in diverse ways.

Her chapter on ideology is a swift encapsulation of received wisdom. Although, citing Deborah Gorhan's work, Purvis notes that "for the majority of middle-class women, the ideal of the cultured lady of leisure with an array of servants never materialised" (p. 6), she does not explore what servantless middle-class women themselves thought of the ideology of the leisured lady and her appropriate education. Nor does she

offer alternatives to the interpretation that a working-class woman engaged in paid work outside the home "especially in the mill or factory...was seen as a degraded being whose condition needed to be 'raised' for the good of society" (p. 8). One can imagine a riposte from the mill workers described in *One Hand Tied Behind Us* by Liddington and Norris, published in 1978.

The two chapters on working-class education are richly supported from research done for Purvis' previous book, *Hard Lessons: The Lives and Education of Working-Class Women in Nineteenth-Century England* (1989). For girls, she identifies seven major types of school: dame schools, Sunday schools, charity schools, factory schools, ragged schools, day board schools belonging either to the Church of England or the dissenting British and Foreign Society, and state day schools after 1870. Without a systematic citation of enrolment and population statistics, it is difficult to know precisely how many girls attended which sort of school over a period of time, but she cites an interesting observation from another scholar that most young people gained their elementary education from Sunday schools. These, it is alleged, were not so much an instrument of social control, as a tool turned by working-class people towards their own ends. There are other stories of resistance to the imposition of alien values. When there was an attempt to reinforce gender ideology in the curriculum of the board elementary schools by the introduction of compulsory domestic science for girls, Purvis

cites material suggesting that the students themselves discarded information purveyed through this medium. It would be useful to see more of this kind of evidence from students.

The chapters on middle-class girls and women show how their schools' curricula tended to stress ornamental knowledge which might attract and impress a suitor. The resulting idleness and boredom on the part of their graduates impelled many women to work for educational reform, and Purvis tells a satisfying story of the foundation of academic secondary schools for middle-class daughters. She emphasizes how the academic high school served only a minority of girls, and it would be interesting to know exactly what the numbers were. As with the few new women's colleges at universities, the academic secondary schools fell into what Purvis calls the "trap" of double conformity: their students followed the same academic subjects open to boys and at the same time they had to adhere to rigid codes of ladylike behaviour (p. 76). Purvis does not show what snare-free options were open to the nineteenth-century educational reformers.

Purvis identifies some intriguing issues, but in a book of this length is unable to develop them in any depth. At Cambridge, for example, Girton College offered to women the same education as men had, whereas Newnham provided a separate and different education—that is, separate lectures followed by a separate examination. It would be interesting to see the contemporary dispute. Concerning the reforms in secondary and higher education, she notes that

academic schools and university education served to privilege some women in their competition with other women. There was less success in equipping women to compete with men. Again, it would be instructive to note the feminist arguments of the time.

There can be no objection to Purvis' last sentence: "the patterns of social class and gender differentiation established in girls' and women's education in the Victorian and Edwardian eras are still echoing in England today" (p. 130). However, one would like to know how loud is the echo, especially in light of the educational reforms after the Second World War and those in the 1970s, neither of which are mentioned. This is a useful book which identifies and raises as many questions as it answers.

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Hilda Kean. *Challenging the State? The Socialist and Feminist Educational Experience 1900-1930.* London: Falmer Press, 1990. Pp. 217. \$25.90.

In *Challenging the State*, Hilda Kean asks to what extent British socialists and feminists were able to mount a thorough-going challenge to the system of state education developed in early twentieth-century Britain. In doing so, she raises ques-

tions that are both particular to the history of the British Left from 1900 to 1930, and remain relevant to a persisting political dilemma: can education be used to challenge the political and economic status quo, and if so, how?

Kean attempts to answer her question by examining both state strategies for education and the ideas and strategies of socialist organizations and feminist teachers who tried to mount a critique of education or offer an alternative to state education. State policy, she argues, consciously used education to "dilute class conflict" (p. 11). The state's success in pursuing anti-socialist aims resulted from its ability to cloak its true ideological intentions in the guise of "equality of opportunity" or extension of services to the disadvantaged. Ironically, she points out, while some of the government's anti-socialist policies were severely critiqued by the labour movement, state control and extension of education went virtually unquestioned, and indeed were popular policies, including in the Labour Party.

On the other hand, Kean concludes that few socialists were "anti-statist" in their view of education, and almost all failed to develop a sophisticated or effective analysis or praxis around the issue. Early socialists like those in the Social Democratic Federation or British Socialist Party simply called for the extension of state education to all, or criticized the economic function education played for capitalism. In other cases, socialists did not develop a "coherent strategy" (p. 40) relating to education (as with the *Workers Dreadnought*) or they utilized unrealistic organizing tactics