

the new female students; and social-comparative. While acceding to Margaret Bryant's view that reform was "contained within the established framework for conventional social structures and attitudes," the author considers the reforms of the century, and particularly their realization between the 1890s and 1909, to have been a major victory for German feminism. Further, he considers that German women, in general, had levels of access to higher studies and opportunities for training and employment as teachers that were relatively similar, if limited, to their counterparts elsewhere in Europe.

In the first chapter, the French historian Olwen Hufton is quoted on the difficulty of "locating a *bon vieux temps* when women enjoyed a harmonious, if hard working domestic role and social responsibility before they were downgraded into social parasites or factory fodder." This consciousness of the need for time and culture perspective, even among historians, on socially and emotionally loaded issues is as refreshing in Albiseti's work as is the disciplined use of his craft in excavating the treasures of this historical site.

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William A. McKim, ed. *The Vexed Question: Denominational Education in a Secular Age.*

St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1988.
Pp. 288. \$14.95 paper.

Newfoundland's denominational school system, a unique survival from the age of religious warfare in North America, has long been an object of contention among residents of that province, especially those involved in education, and a curiosity to most mainland observers. The effective entrenchment of the system by provisions in the 1982 Constitution Act which exempts it from challenges under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees that it is likely to remain so for some time to come.

Editor William McKim, of Memorial University, has assembled a collection of essays which explores Newfoundland's educational system from a variety of perspectives—historical, economic, philosophical—and from the points of view of both opponents and defenders of the principles of denominational education. Aimed at both the scholar and the general reader, the book is designed to explain the mechanics of the denominational system of education, and its origins and historical evolution, and to provide assessments of its efficiency, effectiveness, popularity, and desirability in an increasingly secular society. As is often the case with collections, the book is uneven in the quality of the selections, incomplete in its treatment of the question, and somewhat unbalanced in its generally critical tone with respect to education in Newfoundland.

Easily the best selections are two chapters by Phillip McCann which outline the development of the

denominational system from the nineteenth century to the 1960s. McCann demonstrates that denominational education was from the first a contentious issue in Newfoundland's politics and that the evolution of separate educational institutions was a far from inevitable outcome of the religious rivalry which has characterized the province's history. McCann traces carefully the choices and compromises by which denominationalism carried the day and the political background against which they were made. Repeated efforts to replace or restructure the denominational system have been mounted since its inception, yet each has been frustrated either by spirited opposition from church authorities or political miscalculation on the part of the reformers. McCann's chapters are clearly and engagingly written and bring the reader safely through the maze of complex political manoeuvring which shaped the system and the public figures who played a role in its development.

Less interesting, but helpful, are reviews of the constitutional status of denominational education in Newfoundland by Ronald Penney and in the rest of Canada by P.J. Warren. The acts, regulations, and court decisions which have left denominational schools in a somewhat different position in every province are summarized and compared. Although both chapters are essentially compilations, they are thorough and clearly presented. Both will serve as valuable research tools for anyone wishing to pursue the question of

Church-State educational relations in Canada.

Romulo Magsino expands upon his well-known work on student rights by examining several cases involving the individual rights of students and teachers in a denominational setting. His article points up the inevitability of conflict between the rights of those who value denominational schooling and those who do not share the beliefs of those denominations which operate schools. He responds to the criticisms of the Newfoundland system which are based on financial, legalistic, or ideological grounds by emphasizing the degree to which that system serves to protect community and parental rights. Rather than abolishing the current denominational arrangements, he argues, the province should attempt to accommodate other groups through the addition of a non-denominational board. Such a scheme would certainly prove costly and provide only rough justice, but Magsino perceives more clearly than the other contributors that the major alternative to rough justice is even-handed but universal injustice.

John A. Scott's essay provides an insider's view of the working of one of the Denominational Education Councils, the Roman Catholic. Scott notes the difficulty faced by the councils, which, chronically short of funds and professional staff, carry heavy responsibilities for curricular and other educational policies that are, in other provinces, the responsibility of government departments. In the second part of his chapter, Scott offers a discussion and defence of community rights in education, as against the individual rights which

dominate our contemporary consciousness. Newfoundland, he argues, through its educational system, is one of the few places in the Western world which retains "a spiritual context" in its political institutions, one which offers "the chance to talk about things that are good in themselves or for us as persons" and which "lets people look carefully and seriously at the possibility that there are other ways of experiencing life." Sr. Mary Nolasco Mulcahy touches on some of the same points in her review of the philosophical and theological foundations of denominationalism. Unfortunately, Sr. Mulcahy's essay does little more than re-state, with an adornment of classical, biblical, and patristic quotations, traditional principles of Christian education, without giving consideration to historical and contemporary objections to those principles.

The book's concluding chapters take a strongly critical view of the denominational system. Political scientist Mark Graesser challenges, on the basis of several surveys of public opinion, the view that most Newfoundlanders are so attached to denominationalism that politicians should steer clear of attempts to tamper with it. The available data, he suggests, show that a substantial minority of the population would like to see a single, non-denominational public system, while a majority indicate that they would not object to the disappearance of the denominational system or to limitations to the right of denominational authorities to impose restrictions on the private lives of their teachers. Graesser admits,

however, that many of the opinions expressed may be relatively superficial and that a real challenge to the current system might produce a different response. Graesser believes that such a shift of opinion could result only from an emotional appeal by the system's defenders to religious, patriotic, or "nativist" loyalties, and he seems to discount, unfairly, the possibility that, faced with a real challenge to denominationalism, the churches might articulate more clearly for their adherents arguments in favour of the current arrangements.

Editor William McKim reserves the last chapter for his own review of the costs of denominational education. He argues that Newfoundland's system is inefficient and wasteful, citing the cost of capital expenditures for new school buildings and the duplication of consultant and other services. He also explores the hidden costs associated with the failure of a board to hire the best teachers because of denominational impediments. He claims further that, compared to other provinces, a disproportionate amount of time and money is devoted to religious education in Newfoundland's schools and argues that these resources could be better employed for other educational activities. This claim may be left to the continuing debate over what education is of most worth, but those of us who live in other provinces must smile at the suggestion that poor schools, weak teachers, inequity, and insensitivity are caused by denominational schools.

This volume appeared before the emergence of revelations of sexual exploitation within some Roman

Catholic educational institutions in Newfoundland. This issue will be seized upon, no doubt, despite its irrelevance to the question, by opponents of denominationalism. It is fortunate, therefore, that this book, which provides a useful starting point for intelligent debate and discussion of the place of denominational education in Newfoundland, is available. The book contributes also to our deliberation on the wider question, so cogently discussed in Amy Gutmann's *Democratic Education*, of the cost and value of educational pluralism in a free and democratic society.

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Udo Arnold, ed. *Zur Bildungs- und Schulgeschichte Preussens. Tagungsberichte der historischen Kommission für Ost- und Westpreussische Landesforschung. Vol. 8. Lüneburg: Verlag Nordostdeutsches Kulturwerk, 1988. Pp. 132. 30 DM.*

In the aftermath of World War II, as in the years following the Versailles Treaty of 1919, much German scholarship devoted to the history of the disputed borderlands between Germany and Poland had strong revanchist overtones. During the 1960s and '70s, many historians more critical of the German past focused on the harsh treatment of the Polish minority in Prussia after the creation of the German Empire by Bismarck in 1871. This slim anthology illustrates how in recent years the easing of

political tensions in central Europe and the increase in scholarly contacts have contributed to a more dispassionate examination of the history of this ethnically mixed region.

The Prussia referred to in the title is not the German state of that name, but rather its provinces of East Prussia (the original duchy with its capital at Königsberg/Kaliningrad), West Prussia (obtained in the first "partition" of Poland in 1772 and including the city of Danzig/Gdansk), and South Prussia or Posen/Poznan (obtained in the second "partition" in 1793 and re-acquired after the Napoleonic wars).

In the first essay, Karl-Ernst Jeismann, long active in international efforts to purge nationalist and racist prejudices from history textbooks, provides a general introduction to Prussian educational policies in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Summarizing much recent scholarship, Jeismann downplays the uniqueness of the reforms initiated by Wilhelm von Humboldt in 1809-1810 and stresses instead the gradual strengthening of the state's role in educational administration from the 1770s onward. In this way, he is able to link Prussian developments with Maria Theresa's *Schulordnung* of 1774 in Austria and with the Polish Education Commission established in the wake of the first partition.

In the most interesting contribution to the anthology, Gregor Harzheim compares the efforts of this Polish Education Commission to "modernize" the country after the shock of the first partition with Prussian efforts to integrate the Polish