

raphy. The author is admittedly an enamoured former disciple who feels that it is important to articulate an historical record in which Blatz is appropriately revered. The fact is, the man was not universally revered and there was no insubstantial opposition to aspects of his work. In this book, however, opposition to Blatz and controversies surrounding him are dealt with in a most casual manner. The "teacher as expert" approach which created an entire literature of condescending "parent education" materials was not without its articulate opponents. Blatz's role in the early upbringing of the Dionne quintuplets as a child study experiment based on perceived parental incompetence was similarly subject to intense discussion and debate. And Blatz's and the child study movement's near-exclusive emphasis on middle-class children in single-income families has long been (and continues to be) decried as a narrow and distorted lens on the world of childhood.

While limited by these drawbacks, Raymond's volume does contribute to our understanding of an important figure at an important time in early childhood education in this country. She has been extremely thorough and has made extensive use of previously unstudied documents and archives. (Citations to these references are carefully documented in her footnotes but the book would be further enhanced by a complete listing of Blatz's scholarly and popular writings). Supplemented by interviews with friends and family members, Raymond has provided a description of the life and activities of Blatz. The

task of offering critical insight into the life and times of this compelling figure still remains.

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**Antoine Prost. *Éducation, société et politiques. Une histoire de l'enseignement en France, de 1945 à nos jours*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1992.**

Antoine Prost is one of France's leading French historians of education. His pioneering *Histoire de l'enseignement en France 1800-1967* (Paris, 1968) remains a good introduction to the field, despite the plethora of works published since. He also penned the final volume of the multi-volume *Histoire générale de l'enseignement de l'éducation en France*, t.4, *L'École et la Famille dans une société en mutation* (Paris, 1981), ed. L.H. Parias. He has also written numerous articles in a number of journals and newspapers about contemporary educational trends and has acted as advisor about education to the government of Michel Rocard. *Éducation, société et politiques: Une histoire de l'enseignement en France*, is a collection of previously published articles about French education, three of which have appeared in collections in English: "Schooling and social stratification: paradoxes of the reform of the middle school in 20th-century France," in Achim Lechinsky and Karl Ulrich Mayers, eds., *The Comprehen-*

*sive School Experiment Revisited* (Francfort-sur-le-Main, 1990), 38-61; "Écoles, collèges et lycées in France since 1968," in D.L. Hanley and A.P. Kerr, eds, *May '68: Coming of Age* (London, 1989), 23-42; "The educational maelstrom," in George Ross, Stanley Hoffman, and Sylvia Malzacher, eds., *The Mitterrand Experiment* (Cambridge, 1987), 229-36. The subtitle of this book is rather misleading, for it is a collection of essays written over some years, rather than an integrated history. Moreover, the first three essays deal primarily with the period before World War II; their conclusions also appear in his aforementioned *Histoire générale de l'enseignement*. In the introduction Prost asks whether this book is a history or an essay on educational politics and answers "unequivocally, a history." I would say that it is a bit of both.

The underlying theme of the book is initiatives of reform of the French educational system by a variety of French governments during the post-war period. The irony of French education is that France has probably passed more laws and issued more decrees concerning education than has any other country, but the system established in the Revolution and entrenched under Napoleon has remained firmly in place, immobile if not immutable.

Prost poses a duality of inertia and intervention. Largely critical of sociological theories and approaches as "deterministic," he posits that historians, by focusing on particular events or initiatives, can reveal periods of flux, if not dramatic change. He

points to three failed attempts to alter the system: that of Jérôme Carcopino in 1941 when the results were opposite to the original intention and again in 1959 and 1963 under Jean Berthoin and Christian Fouché. In those instances, social forces and the inertia of the system frustrated attempts to reform. He argues that "loi Edgar Faure," following upon the student revolt of 1968, like the loi Guizot of 1833, was an "incontestable [example of] political decisions determining the evolution of the educational system" despite some retreat from the principles of Faure in succeeding years. Faure's reform did broaden access to elite sections of the educational system, but prestigious schools remained dominant and prerequisites for entry into elites, especially governmental ones. Fundamentally Prost concludes that reform has been possible only during a crisis, which disarms entrenched interests within the educational system.

The central argument about crisis and reform is convincing. And the political history of education has its place. Prost's often trenchant criticisms of failed initiatives and the continuing elitism of French education are provocative. Changes in the écoles maternelles and day-care centres, for example, since 1959 have served the upper middle classes more than they have workers, for whose children the schools were first designed. Prost correctly criticizes the republican school of historiography for its emphasis on the Ferry Laws of 1880-82, which did secularize the system but otherwise merely gave official sanction to universal, free primary schooling

which had basically been achieved prior to the legislation. Nevertheless, Prost's criticisms of sociological approaches to French education seem too harsh. Not only have sociologists but also historians of the *Annales* school emphasized the *longue durée*. Indeed he acknowledges the contribution of historians such as François Furet and Jacques Ozouf (*Lire et écrire: l'alphabétisation des français de Calvin à Jules Ferry*, 1977), although he criticizes their conclusion about relationships between schooling and literacy. Prost makes a mistake that too many historians and social scientists still make—attempts to find causality within statistical correlations. Correlations and regression analysis illuminate *association*; they say nothing about causality. This misunderstanding of statistical argument as well as a prediction for political history results in too harsh a dichotomy drawn between political history and a history that emphasizes long-term trends. The two are not incompatible. It is important to study political initiatives, the motivating forces behind them, and their immediate results even if a longer-term perspective finds more continuity than change.

Prost is certainly correct in describing the loi Guizot of 1833 as one of the important pieces of legislation concerning French education—perhaps even the most important after Napoleon. It encouraged schooling, established normal schools, provided state subsidies, and prescribed curriculum. Without it, the public school system in France might not have come to dominate the plethora of private schools that were developing. Never-

theless, the loi Guizot merely defined the arena within which private and public schools, those for boys and girls (schools in France were generally segregated by sex), and levels of schooling performed. Social processes operated and important modifications occurred with each generation (e.g. Victor Duruy in the 1860s and Ferry in the 1880s). However, situated within prior and subsequent developments in enrolment, attendance, and teacher training, the Guizot Law appears to have accentuated extant tendencies rather than redirecting French schooling.

It is too early to decide whether recent "reforms" have or will significantly alter an educational system that has displayed a remarkable structural continuity over two centuries. Social forces and vested interests have prevailed over many ministers and critics. Prost clearly hopes for reform and although the essays are historical they contain within them some of the author's own agenda. The collection is an informed, intelligent commentary on many contemporary issues in French education, but they are disparate. We still await a comprehensive analysis of French schooling since the Second World War.

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**Peter A. Schouls.** *Reasoned Freedom: John Locke and Enlightenment.* Ithaca and London: