

Editors' Note: The following book review was commissioned by the editors before Dr. Davey agreed to the publication of his 1988 CHEA conference paper in this issue as a review essay. Our thanks to Dr. Davey for the review, and we publish it below as complementary to his essay.

**Bruce Curtis.** *Building the Educational State: Canada West, 1836-1871.* Lewes, U.K., and London, Ontario: Falmer Press & Althouse Press, 1988.

The publication of *Building the Educational State* is an important event not only for historians of education in Canada but for all historians interested in the origins of state school systems in western societies. The book provides a provocative reassessment of the formative years of the state school system in Ontario although the main features of the argument will be familiar to those scholars who have read Curtis' numerous journal articles over the past few years. As Philip Corrigan notes in his preface, Curtis "makes us see differently....The writing releases voices where there had been silences, reveals contradictions where there had been assumptions of smooth singular authority, points to politics where there had been dull administration, and to complex differences where there had been assumptions of simple dichotomy or even uniformity" (p. 9). The historiographic significance of the book lies in Curtis' detailed rereading of the empirical evidence from a sophisticated theoretical framework which incorporates recent develop-

ments in the theory of state formation and power relations. *Building the Educational State* is a major new contribution to the debate about the rise of state schooling and, whether they agree with his overall argument or not, historians working in the field will find the book stimulating.

As I have observed elsewhere in this journal, historians of education have been relatively slow to make use of the insights of Foucault in their discussions of the origins of mass schooling. While I have considerable reservations about adopting his theory unreflectively, one of the great strengths of Curtis' approach is his grounding of Foucault's analysis of power and subjectivity within a marxist theory of state formation and cultural forms which overcomes the problem of ambivalence about class in post-structuralist critiques. It is Curtis' attempt to combine the insights of the two theoretical approaches which is significant. The marxist theory he employs is not in itself particularly new although his elaboration of the concept of the "Educational State" is more detailed and complex and, I suspect, more controversial than other scholars have suggested. His characterization of state education as a means for the remaking of popular culture and character and educational practice as being centrally concerned with political governance is quite similar to the neo-marxist formulations of historians such as Richard Johnson in the late 1970s. That is, Curtis' argument that "the construction of the Educational State was accomplished only through the destruction of a prior

educational organization and the marginalization of the structure of educational possibilities" (p. 15) resembles the construction of a hegemonic state form in the neo-marxist accounts. It is rather surprising, then, that there is no reference to Gramsci or the theory of hegemony in the bibliography or the index as the development of marxist cultural theory since the 1970s has been influenced enormously by the Italian theorist's analysis.

The most interesting aspect of Curtis' use of marxist theory and Foucault's analysis relates to his account of opposition and resistance to the construction and administration of state education. He argues that the establishment of state schooling did not eliminate educational conflict, but rather replaced explicit political struggle over the social form of education with practical struggle over involvement and management of the dominant form. Given his argument that state schooling was primarily concerned with "the anchoring of the conditions of political governance in the selves of the governed," he analyses the relationship between the administrators, the teachers, the parents, and the subjects of schooling, the students, in the new school system. In the process, he locates the elaboration of the "techniques and instruments of educational governance" in the administrators' response to opposition and resistance to the new state form at the level of everyday practice, and provides important new insights into the development of the machinery of schooling.

*Building the Educational State* is divided into two parts. The first part analyses the debates about the most appropriate form of schooling for Canada West in the period from 1836 to 1850 and discusses the various attempts to construct a school system and the eventual triumph of the particular model of state schooling embodied in the School Act of 1850. The second part draws extensively on the correspondence files of the Education Office for Canada West to construct a detailed account of the development of the "Educational State" to 1871. In the process, Curtis discusses the boundaries of the educational sphere, school attendance, the training of teachers, the definition of school knowledge, and the management of forms of violence in the new school system.

Part One builds on the work of other historians of education in Canada West in the period prior to 1850, most notably Gidney and Lawr, and concludes with a discussion of the 1850 Act which Curtis argues resolved the dispute about the relationship between local versus centralized educational management which had preoccupied the property-holding classes from the 1830s. According to Curtis, the Act formed the basis of a broad educational agreement among the governing classes which proved remarkably durable:

The peculiar mix of local election of trustees, appointed and semi-autonomous County Boards, and a strong central authority with broad regulatory powers and well-developed information-gathering procedures

provided both for the local containment of educational conflict and for disciplinary initiatives from the centre (p. 131).

However, the most interesting aspect of Part One is the discussion of Ryerson's educational philosophy in Chapter Three, "Public Construction and Educational Reform." In this section Curtis develops his argument about the role of education in the construction of a domain above politics built on "a new terrain of universality and classlessness in Canadian society." He outlines Ryerson's assertion of the neutrality of procedure, its role in the construction and legitimization of bureaucratic administration, and its connections to notions of "our Common Christianity" and citizenship. Curtis notes that for Ryerson self-government as individual self-discipline and self-government as representative democracy were sides of the same coin and analyses how he abstracted the moral regulatory dimension of Christianity and married it to a pedagogy of rational self-development based on pleasure rather than the fear of punishment. In short, according to Curtis, Ryerson's philosophy involved a form of self-development whereby people in Canadian society would govern themselves. That is, education "was not a *means* to government; education *was* government: government of the self" (p. 110). In this sense, the school system was directly involved in state formation, producing citizens imbued with bourgeois moral values of self-regulation through a seemingly neutral process of education which,

because of the nature of its administration, occupied a domain above politics and class conflict.

In Part Two of *Building the Educational State* Curtis shifts the focus of his analysis from the political debates about the form of state schooling to the conflicts at the local school level over management and administration following the enactment of the School Act of 1850. His intention is to show how "public education was administered into dominance only through a myriad of local struggles" (p. 132) and the four chapters in this section provide important new insights into the construction of the state school system. Chapter Four, "Contestation of Pedagogical Space," provides an innovative analysis of the social reach of the new school system, focussing on the importance of local administrative structures as educational "organs" in the practice of self-government for the community as a whole as well as the students. Curtis explores the implications of the new arrangements for trustees, parents, teachers, students, and the local electorate at large, examining how the dictates of the central office changed the relationship between the various actors at the local level. He also explores opposition to the expansion of the demands of the education system through the analysis of conflicts over the authority of the teacher to govern the behaviour of the students beyond the school grounds and after school hours and demonstrates how the "limits to pedagogical space" were established through these local skirmishes.

In the following three chapters Curtis concentrates his analysis on the practice of schooling itself, examining school attendance, the training and regulation of teachers, and the content of the curriculum. He points out that irregular school attendance after the establishment of the compulsory attendance clauses reflected conflicts between community customs and standards and those demanded in the new state schools, and opposition to aspects of the curriculum, pedagogical practice, or particular teachers as well as conflicts between the rhythms of work and school. He examines the process whereby the new school system enmeshed teachers in a web of practical administrative controls through training in the Normal School, examination for certification, and the articulation of rules and regulations which were policed through inspection and reporting procedures. In "Defining School Knowledge," he focusses on curricular reforms including the secularization of school knowledge through the adoption of the Irish series and the pedagogical implications of the use of a uniform set of texts, such as evaluation, classification, and grading of students. In each of these chapters, the central theme of Curtis' analysis is the relocation of the locus of control in the new school system at the centre and the struggles of local scholars, teachers, and parents to come to grips with the prescriptive administration and control of the bureaucracy. Curtis argues, however, that the habituation of the population to the rules and regulations prescribed by the Central Office was a profoundly political

process designed to assure the hegemony of the newly established "Educational State." The most interesting aspect of his analysis in these chapters is his account of the "developmental logic" of the expansion of central power whereby the vagueness of the limits of administration provoked local struggles which themselves contributed to the growth of the administrative structure. Through this process educational relations were "normalized" to the extent that the opposition of subordinate groups was translated from the arena of social and political struggle into the failure of individuals to conform. Alternative practices were marginalized as the population at large came to accept as "natural" the new educational arrangements, and educational failure became individual social failure, be it as teachers, parents, or scholars.

Curtis uses this insight effectively in his brilliant last chapter on "Pedagogy, Punishment and Popular Resistance." He explores the contradictions between the espousal by Ryerson and other educational theorists of the idea that state education should be gentle and pleasurable, and the practical necessity for corporal punishment in the new school system given the dominant concern with inculcating moral discipline and political subordination. Curtis points out that pedagogical reform in the period aimed to dispossess students, parents, and local school supporters of their customary power to intervene in schoolroom practice of direct physical attacks on the teacher. At the same

time, he argues that the regulations which governed the teacher's use of corporal punishment were deliberately vague as to the degree of force acceptable. He cites numerous examples of local conflicts over excessive violence employed by teachers and analyses how local magistrates increasingly sought instruction from the Central Office as to what was allowed. The practical effect of this process was to allow Ryerson to treat cases of "excessive" violence as the failure of individual teachers while strengthening the right of teachers to use corporal punishment in principle. Good teachers did not need to resort to excessive violence and schooling could be pleasurable for the students if parents consented to act in concert with the school in the subordination of their offspring, and the students themselves consented to become "schoolchildren" who accepted the teacher's authority.

It is difficult in a review of this length to capture the subtlety of Curtis' argument. However, as I suggested in the introduction, *Building the Educational State* provides a provocative analysis of the development of state school systems which will interest all scholars of nineteenth-century schooling in western societies. My major criticism of Curtis is that he fails to provide an adequate account of patriarchal relations in the period. This is not to say that he is insensitive to the reconstruction of gender relations but to suggest that his theoretical framework privileges class conflicts in a way which masks the often contradictory tensions between

capitalist and patriarchal power relations. However, I have no doubt that Curtis' argument will help revivify the debate about the origins of mass schooling. Moreover, it seems certain that Canadian historians of education will be at the forefront of the debates as the recently published and long-awaited *Schooling and Scholars in Nineteenth-Century Ontario*, by Prentice and Houston, traverses the same territory.

Ian Davey  
The University of Adelaide

**Veronica Strong-Boag.** *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada 1919-1939.* Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1988.

Here is a book that will become indispensable to women's history courses. In *The New Day Recalled* Professor Strong-Boag employs a "modified" life course approach which enables her to overcome the chronological limits of the study: a form of periodization that has become a landmark of women's history. The author examines women's lives in six chapters covering the formative years to adulthood; waged employment (before, during, and after marriage or childrearing); courtship, marriage, and its alternatives; household management; childbirth, childrearing, and the influence of the "experts"; and finally, "life after forty." In turn her evidence embraces an impressive range of illustrations and discussions