

The girls in private schools received an education in line with the expectations of the time. They were taught to be loving wives to their husbands but also to help them in their daily business. As far as one can gather from the source materials, the girls at the highly ranked and expensive girls' institutes had a middle-class background, whereas those at in the daycare centres and smaller girls' schools had more modest social backgrounds.

Gold shows us a series of parents—mainly fathers—who belonged to the Copenhagen middle class and, inspired by the French Revolution, wished both their sons and daughters could go to school to become citizens. The parents energetically pursued this project: they created educational societies, sat on the boards, hired teachers, and managed accounts. They even organized charity schools for the daughters of middle class parents who had lost their fortunes.

Without prior guiding traditions in the field of girls' education these early school enthusiasts had to learn from daily experience and from contemporary educational debates. Through case studies of the Copenhagen Daughters School and the school of the Society for Sororal Charity, both from 1791, Gold demonstrates how the curriculum gradually came to harmonize with the new nineteenth-century middle-class conception of the good mother and wife. The old vision of a woman as both wife and helper was pushed to the background.

Gold has written a good and generally informative book. She helps an audience unfamiliar with Danish history to understand developments. For Danes, this is a relatively unknown chapter in the history of Danish education. The source material and the author's imaginative and creative approach are impressive.

Sometimes the author's fondness for the early girls' schools allows her to get lost in empirical details. Further, any historian of childhood will find it surprising that the history of the early private girls' school are interpreted only from a women's history perspective. As a result, the relation between the history of education and the history of childhood is absent.

Ning de Coninck-Smith

Paul Axelrod. *The Promise of Schooling: Education in Canada, 1800–1914* (Themes in Canadian Social History). Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997.

Since the appearance of *Canadian Education: A History* (edited by J. D. Wilson, R. M. Stamp and L.-P. Audet) in 1970 there has been no one-volume synthesis of Canadian educational history. Although Paul Axelrod's *The Promise of Schooling* is not a full-pledged synthesis, as his sub-title indicates it is a summary and analysis of educational developments in nineteenth-century Canada up to World War I.

In about 125 pages of text, Axelrod has managed to survey over a century of educational history. Drawing freely on the work of a large number of educational historians published over the past three decades, he succeeds in touching on all the main themes, including the drive for free, universal, and compulsory education; the place of teachers and the experience, to some degree, of students; separate schools for Roman Catholics and alternative and segregated education for Blacks and Native students; the continuance of private schooling, usually single sex; education in French; university education (a special interest of the author); and the first stages of the New Education or progressive education at the turn of the century. All this is accomplished in a most readable style, clear and concise, free of jargon and without overly academic language. Although the book is organized topically, there is surprisingly little overlap. It is a model, I am sure, of what the editors of this new series, "Themes in Canadian Social History," were seeking to attain. Their series description speaks of books "for undergraduate courses [that] fill the gap between specialized monographs and textbooks." *The Promise of Schooling* fits this description perfectly, with its 150 pages of text, absence of footnotes, and list of major references, as well as with its modest paperback price.

Axelrod is intent on showing the reader how the spread of public schooling in Canada served to extend literacy to all, and thereby to preserve British civilization, to prepare youth for work in an increasingly industrialized economy, and after Confederation to help build the new Canadian nation. Not only the native-born were to be schooled, but also the new immigrants to Canada, who needed to be Canadianized. In some provinces Blacks were educated separately, and of course Native Canadians, under the jurisdiction of the federal government, had their own day and residential schools. The "promise" of schooling was immense, eliciting support from government authorities, church officials, manufacturers, newspaper editors, and, in most cases, parents, too. For most people education was an undeniable panacea for all of society's ills and needs. That faith in education made schooling a central feature of modern Canadian society and continues essentially unabated despite persistent criticism to the present day.

The sorting function of schooling formerly carried out at the secondary level has now been delayed to post-secondary institutions. Even school's severest critics have no desire to see society "de-schooled"; quite the contrary, as many Canadians would echo U.S. President Lyndon Johnson's famous credo: "The answer for all our national problems comes down to one single word: education." Axelrod provides us with the means to understand the origins of public schooling in Canada. Even though schooling was not the sole agency of civilization, vocational training, or nation building, most Canadians attributed success to the schools. I very much doubt that anyone can fully understand Canadian history without some appreciation of the centrality of education. *The*

Promise of Schooling does an admirable job of telling this story for the nineteenth century.

Axelrod writes with commendable balance. Always fair to his sources, he eschews the harsh and petulant tone often evident among radical revisionists writing in the 1970s. He is much more modest in proclaiming the merits of his interpretation of events. The following is typical of his approach to past histories: "This study contends that the traditional account of the development of schooling in Canada is not so much incorrect as incomplete" (p. viii). Or again, consider where he admits that public education was "coercive," but then quickly adds, supported by "largely popular legislation" (p. 24). He reminds us that although universal schooling was a top-down project, ordinary citizens had their own reasons for supporting it. Little wonder, then, that attendance figures rose to quite high levels even before compulsory legislation was introduced in the last quarter of the century.

In an account of this sort, no matter how well written, errors are bound to creep in and this book is no exception. The first mechanics' institute in British North America was opened in York (Toronto) in 1830, not Halifax the following year. The original "Districts" in Upper Canada were actually larger than counties. The school for Blacks at Buxton was not in Brantford but near Chatham. British Columbia had a Compulsory Attendance Act from 1876, though attendance was not enforced until after 1900; Axelrod states that the first such legislation in B.C. dated from 1901. Pestalozzi was Swiss, not Swedish.

Despite a thriving Canadian History of Education Association with a twice-yearly journal of its own (this one), we professors are aware that across Canada, History of Education is in decline as a component of a slate of courses that Bachelor of Education students are required to take. This is a pity, since a book like Axelrod's is a perfect vehicle for teaching the history of Canadian education. Comprehensive yet brief, inclusive of historiographical debates yet highly readable, this book is ideal for such students. But then, one hopes this book will also be adopted in Canadian social history courses, for no topic is more central to social history than education. Unfortunately, that might be news to some colleagues in History departments.

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