

Osler was an extraordinary individual. He left a lasting mark on people he met, students he taught, and the colleagues with whom he worked. His love and enthusiasm for medicine was contagious. Bliss's biography makes you care for the man and the most poignant section is the death of his beloved son and only child, Revere, during the First World War. But even after that death, his home and life remained open to others, including soldiers and medical servicemen on leave, who found a home with Osler and his wife Grace, if even only for an afternoon or evening.

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Thomas Fleming, ed. *School Leadership: Essays on the British Columbia Experience, 1872-1995*. Mill Bay: Bendall Books, 2001. Pp. 427.

For many years now Tom Fleming, Canada's pre-eminent historian of educational administration, has been researching and writing articles about the administration of public education in British Columbia since its inception in 1872. Working in splendid isolation at the University of Victoria, Fleming has succeeded in giving us a clear picture of the leaders and the bureaucratic arrangements responsible for the success (or failure) of this system. It is therefore of benefit to all students of educational history to have available in one place most of Fleming's best articles. Although this is a multi-authored collection, half of the fourteen chapters consist of previously published articles by Fleming.

In his well-written Introduction, Fleming establishes that the purpose of the collection is to describe and analyze the changing character of school leadership in British Columbia. The "stability and order" of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth has, in Fleming's view, given way to "conflict

and uncertainty today.” “Educational orthodoxy” is gone and there is no public consensus about schools. A serious “leadership vacuum” now exists, and the main problems facing school officials are the increasing politicization of schooling and the power of special-interest groups. In Fleming’s description of things, there is a certain nostalgia for days gone by, for a world we have lost. Nonetheless, he explains that his choice of articles was driven by a desire to “describe” rather than “prescribe,” by concern with what school leadership “is” rather than what it “ought to be.” The implication here is that conventional treatments of school leadership and administration emphasize almost exclusively the latter.

The book is conveniently divided into two parts. The first part encompasses the “views from headquarters,” or the roles played by superintendents, inspectors, and other education bureaucrats located in Victoria. The second part provides a more bottom-up perspective by looking at the contributions of “ordinary participants” such as trustees, teachers, principals, local politicians, and parents. This allows Fleming to assert that “these essays furnish a more cohesive and comprehensive study of leadership than can be found elsewhere,” a not exaggerated claim except that teachers’ unions receive no play at all. About the only mention of the BCTF is a nasty swipe from an unnamed principal who observed, regarding their devious influence, that “it’s like watching the Mozambique rebels take over the capital” (p. 13).

As mentioned, Tom Fleming’s previously published articles make up the bulk of the collection. Most of them concentrate on “views from headquarters” with two separate historical surveys of provincial superintendents and school inspectors forming the backbone of his work. These articles, “Our Boys in the Field” and “The Imperial Age and After,” are routinely cited by educational historians of British Columbia. His analysis of Alexander Robinson’s twenty-year tenure as provincial superintendent (1899-1919) is based entirely on a detailed examination of his correspondence, incoming and outgoing. Robinson wrote more than 120,000 letters to a vast array of people and institutions. This article is a model of just what can

be achieved with such rich source material. Peppered with well-selected quotes from Robinson's letters, this study provides an inside view of the typical working day of this energetic bureaucrat. Like Ryerson and Jessop before him, Robinson was a tireless promoter of public education who concerned himself not only with the big issues of the day, such as the rapid expansion of the provincial school system and its bureaucratization, but also with the mundane, such as teachers found at school under the influence of alcohol. Fleming calls him a transitional figure in that he was the last superintendent to rule the provincial system single-handedly. It was during his stewardship that the educational bureaucracy in Victoria grew from six to more than sixty people, much later than in other jurisdictions such as Massachusetts and Ontario. In this era there was no friction between the Education Office and the field because the latter knew its place, namely to simply execute orders from headquarters without question. Remote and controlling, Robinson exemplified a time, in Fleming's words, "before modern psychology, pedagogical progressivism, and special interest politics changed the public temper...about what schools could and should do" (p. 46).

Another real contribution is Fleming's study (with Madge Craig) of New Westminster Superintendent Margaret Strong. Strong was a remarkable woman who prior to 1958 was the only female superintendent or inspector and one of only two women who managed to crack the exclusively male educational bureaucracy in British Columbia. (The other was Lottie Bowron, the Rural Teachers' Welfare Officer from 1928 to 1934, whose experiences are recounted in Chapter 4.) Strong was the Charlotte Whitton of her day—strong, courageous, and outspoken. After her unhappy experience as a municipal inspector between 1913 and 1915, she went on to a brilliant international career and certainly deserves to be better known among the first wave of Canadian feminists. Fleming effectively turns Strong's experience into a case study of the inherent potential for conflict where you had municipally appointed inspectors in the large cities of the province still operating under the jurisdiction of the provincial inspector as the government's

officer-in-the-field. This was to be the source of Strong's troubles although she also found herself in dispute with the New Westminister School Board. That the local newspaper considered her both secretive and autocratic didn't help matters. Perhaps the editor too was uncomfortable with such strong female leadership. In any case Strong saw fit to resign in order to avoid being fired by the School Board. She then moved to Ontario to become a senior civil servant in the Department of Labour and in the 1920s worked for the League of Nations. Following completion of a doctorate she eventually became director of the School of Social Work at the University of Louisville, returning to Canada in 1941.

Fleming's other articles round out his very comprehensive treatment of educational administration in the province. Besides the historical surveys of the inspectorate and the superintendency already mentioned, there is a very interesting and previously unpublished prosopography of the elementary and secondary school principalship from 1872 to 1918. Among other things this study establishes that in the late nineteenth century most teachers in B.C. came from Ontario and the Maritimes where they had attended normal schools or obtained university degrees and acquired some teaching experience; that until 1918 it was reasonably common for women to be elementary school principals—in fact, women outnumbered men in Victoria; and that late-nineteenth-century principals were, as a rule, more open and transparent to parents and the public than their counterparts a century later. All told, this article through its focus on the principal tells us a great deal about B.C. public schools before 1918.

Fleming's final article is a biography (with David Conway) of C.B. Conway, a "scientific measurement" man who headed the Department's research bureau from 1938 to 1974. Again, Fleming is very adept at charting the changes Conway experienced from his early days as a former student of Peter Sandiford, the guru of educational testing and statistics in Canada, to his retirement amidst the upheaval caused by the appointment in 1974 of Stanley Knight "to assist in the development of changes in education" expected by the NDP

government. Poor Conway. As an unrepentant centralist and convinced practitioner of scientific tests and measurements in the tradition of Edward Thorndike, he had for years fended off challenges from colleagues and superiors in the name of scientific truth. But from the mid-sixties his influence began to fade. In Fleming's words, "yesterday's reformer turned today's conservative" (p. 152). As educational decision-making became increasingly defined in political terms, it must have been hard for Conway to observe the tremendous changes around him that forced a serious re-evaluation of his life's work. As the standards he had fought for noticeably eroded (or eventually disappeared altogether) how bitter and disillusioned he must have felt. For Conway, "science had been usurped by the politics of popularity" (p. 152). An excellent article.

Another prominent educational historian of British Columbia included in the collection is John Calam. His work is represented by an excerpt from his popular 1991 edition of rural school inspector Alex Lord's memoirs and by his personal memoir of his own experience as teacher and school principal in north-central British Columbia in the 1950s. This is an absolutely delightful account with some hilarious stories from another era, well told in an understated fashion. The first twenty pages of the memoir section should be required reading for all aspiring principals. As to the other memoir, Lord was very typical of "Our Boys in the Field," as Fleming entitles his article (Chapter 2) on the school inspectorate. He was a transplanted Easterner, very conservative and tradition-bound, but fancied himself as a bit of an adventurer. He loved to regale people with stories of his exploits and occasional mishaps encountered while carrying out his tours of inspection. But significantly, his memoir says very little about public education and virtually nothing about the hundreds of schools he visited (in sharp contrast to Lottie Bowron). Instead we learn a lot about how inspectors perceived themselves and their importance in society.

Of the four new pieces (excluding Fleming's on the principalship), the most revisionist is Helen Brown's study of Nanaimo's public schools in the 1890s. Derived from her recent U.B.C. doctoral thesis, Brown through a detailed study of

Nanaimo's schools in one decade seeks to challenge the myth, as she sees it, of B.C.'s highly centralized school system. She mounts a great deal of evidence to demonstrate that Nanaimo school board officials and local politicians were able to act with considerable autonomy vis-à-vis Victoria in seeing to the expansion of their school system. But in the end her argument lacks sharpness and precision and falls short of the revisionist potential her evidence suggests. Her conclusion that "'local' resistance was as important as 'central' initiatives in structuring the system of school finance" (p. 214) understates her evidence which suggests a much closer link with the findings of historians in other jurisdictions, such as Lawr and Gidney and Curtis in Ontario, Michael Corbett in Nova Scotia, and myself and Paul Stortz in early-twentieth-century British Columbia.

The final three articles treat the topic of the B.C. School Trustees Association (by James London), locally employed school superintendents after 1974 (by Vernon J. Storey), and "Changing Public Attitudes to Government Initiatives, 1865-1995," by Alastair Glegg. The last is the best of these three essays.

This well-illustrated collection is primarily the story of centralization and bureaucratization in B.C. public education, and secondarily in the last three decades their replacement by more local control. But another tradition was also shattered more recently, namely the systematic exclusion of women from the top ranks of the educational hierarchy. There is no more graphic illustration of this than the photo on page 346 that shows the district superintendents at a meeting in Victoria in 1972. Among the almost 70 men in dark suits stands in the front row one sole woman. Let it not be said that women have not made progress in the administration of B.C. education in the last thirty years. The current Minister of Education, for example, is a woman.

Considering the overall value of this book as a text for teacher education and graduate courses, it is a pity there isn't a chapter on the first Superintendent of Education, John Jessop (check out Patricia Dunae's entry in volume XIII of the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*) nor on S.J. Willis, Alexander Robinson's

successor, who served from 1919 to 1945 (check out Valerie Giles' 1994 UBC Ph.D. thesis on Willis). Another obvious omission is the absence of a chapter on George M. Weir, whose influence as Minister of Education on the province's public education system extended from the mid-1920s for another two decades. Nonetheless, this collection makes a major contribution to the understanding of the governance of the B.C. school system since 1872.

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Valerie J. Korinek. *Roughing It in the Suburbs: Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000. Pp. 512.

“What to Wear When You're Tall, Short, Thin, Curvy, Athletic, Pregnant,” “75 Sex Moves to Thrill A Man,” “619 Best Fashion and Beauty Buys,” blared the most recent crop of popular American women's fashion magazines, *Vogue*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Bazaar*. Not to be outdone, Canada's *Elle* enticed readers with the question: “Is Love Really All You Need?”

It is not surprising that many feminists have considered women's magazines to be detrimental to feminism. According to the standard argument, women's magazines are dominated by male executives, advocate a conservative role for women, foster general insecurity about women's appearance and relationships, appeal to a homogeneous readership, and encourage consumption of the products advertised in the magazine. Valerie Korinek attempts to debunk this line of reasoning by focusing on *Chatelaine*, Canada's premier anglophone women's magazine in the fifties and sixties.

Korinek holds that during its heyday, *Chatelaine* was a feminist text disguised as a suburban women's magazine. For