

failed to show was why a radical interpretation was justified. The feebleness of his response to the arguments of democratic elitists like Walter Lippmann during the 1920s is but one conspicuous example of that failure.

My differences with Westbrook should not obscure my admiration for this great book. For me the protagonist of *John Dewey and American Democracy* emerges as a rather tragic figure—a theorist of generous political sentiments who never constructed a theory equal to those sentiments. He deserved an intellectual biography in which the author's scrupulous objectivity is gently tempered by a Deweyan generosity of spirit, and from Robert Westbrook he has received what he deserved.

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Dennis Carlson. *Teachers and Crisis: Urban School Reform and Teachers' Work Culture.* New York and London: Routledge, 1992. Pp. 288. \$19.95 Cdn. paper.

The restructuring of Canadian schooling in alignment with more general ruling fiscal and managerial strategies has been in process for at least the past decade. The pace may be about to quicken. In October, 1992, the federal government's "Steering Group for Prosperity" released its report, *Inventing our Future*. In part, the report called for "competence-based systems for all levels of educa-

tion and training where success is defined by measurable skills" (p. 8). It was followed by a major five-part series in the *Globe and Mail* and a cover story in *Maclean's*, both of which focused on schooling and highlighted the presumed national movement of parents demanding that both schools and teachers return to "the basics."

Dennis Carlson makes a valuable contribution to both our understanding of and potential resistance to this agenda in *Teachers and Crisis: Urban School Reform and Teachers' Work Culture*. Carlson's central intent is to disclose the cultural formation of American teachers as workers responding to the state's institutionalization of a package of "basic skills" reforms over the past two decades. The package has included standardized testing, a competency-based curriculum, performance-based lesson and unit planning, time-on-task approaches to classroom management, and teach-to-the-test approaches to instruction. Carlson's explicit alignment with the interests of working teachers has meant that a polarization of management and labour within schools is also recognized as an important element of the "back to the basics" implementation. Carlson argues that an implicit critique of the crises which account for the state's adoption of the basics skills programme is contained within teachers' work culture. This critique has the potential of moving a political constituency of teachers into alignment with other movements for democratic and progressive reforms, he argues.

Carlson defines the basic skills programme as a response to four crises in urban American education. The first crisis is the consequence of a mismatch between labour power supply and labour power needs in the U.S. economy. That is, we are living in an era with a surplus of college graduates but a shortage of job candidates possessing even the minimum literacy requisites to complete unskilled tasks in the service economy. Employers' needs for functionally literate employees who can listen to and follow directions adequately are not being met. The teaching of basic skills is aimed, in part, at filling these needs. The second crisis is one of legitimation in a period of increasing social chaos and popular anti-government sentiment. The opportunity to blame not only minority and working-class students but also teachers for producing "illiterate" citizens helps legitimize systemic inequality in education outcomes. The conservative ideology promoting "basic skills" reform is a manifestation of this victim-blaming. Third, standardized competency-based curricula allow for larger class sizes as a partial response to the fiscal crisis of the state. Fourth, basic skills curricula increase the possibility of maintaining classroom order in the context of a potentially explosive social environment, especially in inner cities.

Carlson claims that until fairly recently the constitution of teaching work left it as one of the few remaining examples of semi-autonomous craft labour. The implementation of the basic skills programme as a means of increasing teacher accountability has

forced job rationalization. Thus, both teachers' labour process and teacher unionism have taken on an increasingly industrial character. Changes in teachers' work culture produced by this change mean, in part, that there is now the basis amongst teachers for a commitment to critical pedagogy and progressive political change. However, this potential is limited by the failure to date of the unions to link up with a broader progressive coalition.

In a case study of basic skills restructuring in a highly urbanized Northeastern U.S. state, Carlson documents the conflict over the institutionalization of standardized tests. He argues that standardized testing may actually contribute to a *decline* in levels of functional literacy. He documents the state government's use of "effective schools" research to legitimize underfunding. At the same time, Carlson concedes that demands for increased funding of centralized educational bureaucracies are only a partial solution to genuine crisis in literacy education. Whether he concedes too much in response to demands for dismantling of the state's social apparatus, and the extent to which he is correct that a crisis in functional literacy levels actually exists, may be subject to continuing inquiry and debate.

Carlson also analyzes the struggle over education restructuring in one local school district. Here, a district teachers' union's attempts to oppose the top-down reforms were limited by the union's inability to mobilize the rank-and-file. To some extent, these efforts may have been stymied by the union's difficulties in overcoming

sexism within the ranks. To some extent also, the union was limited by the choice to conduct the battle by defending existing labour conditions rather than politicizing the conflict through a broader analysis and the seeking of community support. Some would argue that such a suggestion is itself somewhat idealistic. These explanations for union difficulties are largely speculative in Carlson's work. Less speculative is the evidence provided here that a polarization between labour and management, as well as work intensification and routinization for teachers, has been an outcome of the basic skills implementation. At the same time, limited teacher resistance has meant that management has been unable to secure complete school restructuring as they would have wished. This analysis is carried out through an examination of central issues in contract negotiations. Arguably, Carlson's analysis would have been more fruitful in this chapter if he had utilized labour process theory, as R.W. Connell did in *Teachers' Work* (1985), rather than the game theory he did rely on.

Basic skills policies have also led to a reconstruction of teacher-student relations in schools. Carlson draws on data from studies in two schools to analyze new efforts at scientific classroom management. New strategies such as Assertive Discipline have altered the mode of managing teacher-student relations but fail to resolve the possibly endemic crisis of control in contemporary schools. Turning to the common concerns of school violence, assault charges against teachers, and racist stereotyping, he maintains a

perspective which serves to deepen our understanding of these occurrences while avoiding teacher-blaming. Carlson provides data to support his argument that the concern of "effective teaching" loyalists for time-on-task management is a control strategy as much as an instrument for raising test scores.

The package of "basic skills" reforms addressed in this text follows a long tradition of attempts at imposing top-down accountability on teachers. However, it is only with technological advances in curriculum design and the organization of instruction that new systems for standardizing and predetermining classroom work (and thus further deskilling teachers) have been possible. These technological changes have helped create the necessary conditions for the basic skills programme to be introduced. The rise of authoritarian populism as the basis for the not-so-New Right has provided political preconditions. In his concluding chapter, Carlson briefly discusses these contextual matters. He identifies central contradictions inherent in the implementation of the policies which will limit their success. Liberal alternatives to the populist and corporate demands, themselves promoted by leading corporate-sponsored think tanks, are also reviewed. Difficulties in implementing these strategies, given their inherent limitations and the political environment, are identified. While for many rank-and-file teachers, the liberal proposals may seem welcome alternatives to the current strategies, Carlson joins other critical writers in proposing more radical alternatives. These are alterna-

tives, he argues, more likely to serve the genuine interests of working teachers, students, and working-class parents.

However, his specific contribution to the critical literature at this stage, as well as throughout the text, is his explicit and extensive treatment of teachers as workers and political/cultural actors. What does critical pedagogy mean when we treat its implications for workplace organization seriously? Carlson responds to this question. Interestingly, the potential of this standpoint is limited by his use of post-structuralist theory to argue that "teacher unions will need to begin working to overcome bipolar opposition between educational labor and management if they are to re-empower the teaching occupation and restructure schools in democratic ways" (p. 247). This is a stance which he warns against taking too far. Nevertheless, the conclusion is one of the richest chapters in a book certainly worth reading by those prepared to join or continue the battle against conservative entrenchment in schools.

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Herbert M. Kliebard. *Forging the American Curriculum: Essays in Curriculum History and Theory.* New York and London: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc., 1992. Pp. xv, 223. \$19.95 Cdn.

The title of this work, it should be understood, refers not so much to its

focus as to its structure: six essays on curriculum history and six on curriculum theory. Of the twelve essays, eleven have been previously published. Only "Keeping Out of Nature's Way: The Rise and Fall of Child Study as the Basis for the Curriculum, 1880-1905" is published for the first time. The rest originally appeared in such publications as *Curriculum Inquiry*, *Peabody Journal of Education*, *American Journal of Education*, and *American Educational Research Journal*.

In curriculum history, besides the above named, there are pieces on the rise of scientific curriculum-making, Dewey and the Herbartians, liberal arts curriculum and general education, the decline of the humanities in the American school curriculum, and "success and failure in educational reform" and the "lessons" to be drawn therefrom. The essays in curriculum theory include Kliebard's 1970 essay on "The Tyler Rationale," as well as essays on Dewey and curriculum theory, bureaucracy and curriculum theory, and one on the problem of teacher education, all from the 1970s; and "Curriculum Theory as Metaphor" (1982) and "Vocational Education as Symbolic Action" (1990). With the exception of these last two essays, which are marvellous, and of which more below, those readers familiar with Kliebard's work will not find any surprises here. Readers unfamiliar with Kliebard's work, who have some knowledge of the history of American education and curriculum theory, may celebrate the range of subjects on which he knowledgeably touches but, again with the exception of "Cur-