To engage more properly both the revisionist and contemporary literature historians need more fully to utilize the language and theory of contemporary sociology and social science, and of social and labour history. And as we grope for appropriate approaches to the past we might reacquaint ourselves more fully with the great debates of the seventies. Because the revisionist historians seem not to have answered their questions satisfactorily, it doesn't mean that these were the wrong ones to begin with.

With a few others, Ueda has well begun to plot the avenues to adulthood in the twentieth century and the centrality of schooling to that process. As we begin to study class formation in twentieth-century Canada we should profit from Ueda's lead and ask what streets led through high school, and why some students yielded and some stopped. In the process we might begin to fill our post-revisionist lacuna, and begin to sketch an indigenous picture and theory of Canadian class formation. Properly in gear on the avenues to adulthood, we might even ask—who was driving?

1. Michael Katz, *The Irony of Early School Reform* (Cambridge 1968); Maris Vinovskis, *The Origins of Public Schools: A Reexamination of the Beverly High School Controversy* (Madison 1985).
2. Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America* (New York 1976); John Goldthorpe, *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain* (Oxford 1980).
3. Joel Perlman, "Who Stayed in School? Social Structure and Academic Achievement in the Determination of Enrolment Patterns, Providence, Rhode Island, 1880-1925," *Journal of American History* 72 (1985).
4. Randall Collins, "Functional and Conflict Theories of Educational Stratification," *American Sociological Review* 36 (1971).
5. Lester Thurow, *Generating Inequality* (New York 1975).

Dan Hawthorne
Malaspina College

David F. Labaree. *The Making of an American High School: The Credentials Market and the Central High School of Philadelphia, 1838-1939.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988. Pp. 208, index. $30.00 U.S.

David Labaree's study of the pre-eminent high school of Philadelphia is a major contribution to our understanding of the tensions between democratic opportunity and meritocratic credentialling in education. Labaree's thesis is that the success of the high school in providing access to occupational markets through diplomas and credentials inevitably brought political pressures to widen access to secondary education. However, the widespread availability of education then lowered the market value of the credential which, in turn, led to pressure either to curb access or to develop stratification strategies like tracking and curriculum differentiation to distinguish among students. This process affected Central and, Labaree argues, it is

applicable to the history of American secondary education more generally.

During the mid-nineteenth century, Philadelphia created Central High School to serve four purposes: preparation for republican citizenship, moral education, practical preparation for occupations, and meritocratic competition. The former two involved the public purposes of secondary education; the latter two focused on the private, individualistic goals of economic and occupational achievement. The school's most lasting success lay in the area of meritocracy: the middle class of Philadelphia competed to enter Central and competed to graduate. So intense was the competition that between 1838 and 1920 only 25% of the school's students graduated and "the sole factor that exerted a consistent and powerful effect on a student's chances for graduation was his level of academic achievement" (p. 36).

Going to high school was an opportunity to get ahead; graduating, as only one in four did, furthered even more one's chances of success. But it was precisely the market success of Central that opened it to political challenge. If it was such a good thing, why should it be limited to the few? Examining this question leads Labaree into an analysis of the bureaucratization of the Philadelphia school system, seeing that process as a political effort to undercut the market-based power of the high school. A series of changes reduced Central's control over its clientele and its curriculum. For example, the school board began to require that grammar school diplomas be allowed for admission rather than the previous written examination given by Central, thus giving greater authority to the grammar schools and reducing the high school's power of selectivity. The board changed Central's special status by opening new high schools and treating Central as just one of the city's high schools. And it redefined the position of high school teacher from one of privilege towards a more proletarian condition.

The lessening of Central's special status reduced the school's market value. It threatened to make Central just another secondary school within the city of Philadelphia. And because secondary education was itself expanding, the market value of any high school diploma was being cheapened. In Labaree's terms, the pressures of democratic politics to expand opportunity and to curb the special nature of selective secondary schools "drove down the exchange value of its credentials" (p. 135). But that is only part of the story, for the balance wheel once again shifted—through the creation of a new stratified college preparatory curriculum as a market response to democratic political pressures.

Labaree's examination of the emergence of the differentiated curriculum at Central is a case study of how curriculum tracking became a mechanism for protecting middle-class students "against the leveling influence of rising enrollments" while channelling them into the university

(p. 135). Central's original curriculum reflected the common school ideology of the mid-nineteenth century. Students took the same programme; it was both practical and academic; and it stressed moral outcomes. Over the course of the century, the stress on moral aims began to give way to a stress on academic success and the private and personal gains that came from that success. At the end of the century, Central adopted a new curriculum that separated students into different courses of study. In 1900, four existed: the classical, the Latin-scientific, and the modern languages-scientific courses were college preparatory; the commercial course of study was for those not intending to go on to college.

The abandonment of the uniform course of study for electives solidified and extended stratification in the high school—by social class, by expected vocational outcomes, by hierarchies of knowledge. Stratification through a differentiated curriculum was a response to the growing demand for access to secondary education, and in Philadelphia, to Central High in particular. Central was in no position to deny that access; political pressure was simply too strong. But by dividing up the curriculum and then stressing the practical utility and meritocratic nature of the divisions, Central was able to protect its market niche and its democratic obligations. Central "abandoned its original political goal of providing a common education with a useful content for all students and adopted a new goal closely linked to the realities of the market: providing different courses for different people and stressing exchange value over content" (p. 171).

The Making of an American High School is an immensely valuable study—a major achievement for a first book. Many of its central themes have appeared before, in studies by David Hogan, Harvey Kantor, David Cohen, and myself. But no study has yet appeared that quite so effectively tells the story of one school and does so with a clear thematic argument. The conflict between democratic purposes and market outcomes has indeed been fundamental to the evolution of American secondary education and, increasingly in the twentieth century, to higher education as well. Labaree effectively captures that tension. But having said that, let me conclude by wishing that Labaree had also taken us inside Central High. To those studying high schools today, it has become clear that the world inside the school, the way life goes on, the ebb and flow of classroom interactions, the definitions of success and failure, are all part of the educational story. Labaree stands outside that part of the story. He writes from a distance, and while he paints a superlative picture of the way the larger themes affected the goals and structure of Central High School, he gives us very little about those thousands of students and faculty who lived in Central. We need to know about them, because without them, the big themes become divorced from their—and our—lives.

Marvin Lazerson
University of Pennsylvania