

treatment in their journals? The biographical accounts are so well-rounded, interesting in their own right, and believable that the reader is led to an acceptance of the complexity of these women's work, the many frustrations created by limited resources and rising expectations, and the undeniable social and economic value of this waged and unpaid labour.

The author has taken care in providing a fairly representative range of women for this analysis. Although the women are all Caucasian and mostly literate and articulate, they come from rural districts and small and larger towns across the colony, from families living close to destitution and those of the comfortable elite. Very importantly, in their ranks are women of all ages, with single women figuring importantly along with wives and mothers. A study like Jane Errington's is long overdue. Hers is a welcome corrective to the many dismissive assumptions about the nature and value of women's domestic and waged labour.

Sharon Anne Cook  
University of Ottawa

Clinton B. Allison, *Present and Past: Essays for Teachers in the History of Education*. New York: Peter Lang, 1995. Pp. 209. US\$29.95 paper.

Clinton Allison has undertaken a long overdue project: the creation of a volume about the history of education aimed at the practising teacher. His aim, as he states in the introduction, is not to provide a comprehensive history of schooling in America, but rather, "to provide historical perspectives on some important contemporary issues." Thus, as the title itself suggests, this is a collection of essays on history that is driven collectively and individually by challenges of the present.

The essay topics draw readers into debates over many of the "hot-button issues" facing teachers today. Three chapters are about the history of the teaching profession (or semi-profession), one about school governance, and one each about race, poverty, and gender issues. The first and framing essay raises the most important question of all, in Allison's words, "What Are Public Schools For Anyway?"

Throughout, Allison's language is breezy and conversational. His narrative moves well from anecdote to theory and back, and Allison resists (almost always) the temptation to sermonize that arises whenever one tries to distill complex arguments into simple, matter-of-fact statements. The result is a volume that is accessible, informative, and certain to give teachers a better sense of the institutional world and collective memories they have inherited.

At the same time, professional historians of education will be pleased to find that Allison has been ecumenical in his reading and balanced in the arguments he highlights in this compressed volume (195 pages of text).

Yet this is not to say that *Present and Past* is simply a compilation of essays on interesting historical precedents to current practices, nor to say that Allison's work is without a thesis of its own. For certainly *Present and Past* has a point of view, and this is clearly stated at the outset by Allison and by series editor Joe Kinchloe. Both see teachers as victims of the profession's collective memory, a memory that justifies inequality, that obscures elements of structure and practice from critical enquiry, and that limits teachers' sense of their own efficacy against the weight of what is seen as inevitable, natural, or normal. Implicit in this is the idea, central to the revisionist historical revival of the 1960s and 1970s, that Whiggish histories of education emphasizing the natural march of progress obscure the struggles and tensions that shaped the educational present. Like the revisionists, Allison seeks to create a history in which contest, not inevitability, drives change. In this light, Allison argues that a "major purpose for the study of history is to escape from its clutches, to liberate ourselves from the past" (p. xiii).

This notion that a knowledge of history enhances agency among teachers is the volume's most powerful argument and also the standard against which the essays themselves should be judged. Do they, in fact, provide a lever by which we can pry ourselves from a notion of the inevitable present by understanding a contested past in which alternatives were argued and choices made?

Against this standard the essays measure up well. The first essay, on the purposes of schooling, in many ways best meets Allison's goal of creating a liberating history, reminding teachers that schooling in this country developed at a particular moment in time (the colonial period) to meet particular challenges (decline in religious observance, infinite temptations of wilderness, and examples of alternative and welcoming Native cultures). Thus schools were created first and primarily as agencies of social control; what academic and literary focus they had served these utilitarian ends. Knowing this, the subsequent history of adding on to this original mission takes on its properly problematic and, as Allison argues, contradictory character. The insights are powerful and the lessons, not just about the origins of schools, but about history itself, are clear.

The essays on the history of teaching have similar insights. Knowing that teaching was seen first as part-time employment for males headed to professions, and later as part-time employment for young women headed into marriage does much to explain the difficulty of subsequent struggles to create an authentic profession. Stories of boarding 'round, of idiotic school boards and politicized hiring practices will do much to disabuse any teachers who still

believe in the notion that there was a golden age of teaching sometime in the distant past.

The essay on governance takes a similar stance, discussing the pull and haul between political governance and administrative control as a way to demonstrate that there is no "natural law" of school organization and control. But this essay, which is in many ways the pivotal essay for teachers, discussing, as it does, who decides matters of school policy and how this has come to be so, is burdened by departures from Allison's usual style that come off as heavy-handed ("Members of these elites who do not serve on school boards belong to the same golf clubs and city clubs as those who do" [p. 73]). More importantly, the chapter fails to live up to Allison's main goal of restoring a sense of struggle and alternative vision to the past and hence to the present.

The chapter begins well, with the argument that "there were competing models of schools (in purpose and governance) in early American history" (p. 75). But after a rather relentless rehearsal of Katz's typology of early school structures, Tyack's and Hansot's centralization thesis, and Callahan's depiction of the cult of efficiency, one is left with a profound and disquieting feeling that it was all inevitable after all. In fact, after introducing the work of William Reese on working-class activism on its own behalf, even Allison is forced to summarize, rather weakly that although "Bureaucratic control of public schools . . . was resisted, sometimes vigorously. . . . Nonetheless, by the middle of the twentieth century it was the prevailing form of school organization in the United States" (p. 88).

The passive voice tells much of the tale. In a critical essay, inevitability seems to reign. Allison fails to give teachers a clear sense of how all this happened and misses, in the process, an opportunity to discuss not just class cohesiveness (see golf clubs above) but also power and its relationship to fundamental decisions about the way schools are structured and, in turn, to the fundamental conditions in which teachers live their professional lives. Agency, of both the historical actors and the teachers who are the audience of this history, is subordinated.

In contrast, the chapters on race, gender, and poverty are models of how to present particular decisions in the context of alternatives and in the hands of historical actors and agents. Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois come alive again in Allison's hands, as do the collection of white philanthropists who say their interests were supported by the former and threatened by the latter.

In sum, Allison has done a great service not only to the teaching profession, but to historians as well. Among this latter group, we all need models of how our work can be relevant and important to teachers. Allison's goal, not merely to debunk the past but to demonstrate it as a site for contention about

alternative ways of seeing and acting, should be a central element of this model, for it is only from this liberation from the dead hand of the past, as Marx reminded us long ago, that agency and independent action arise. At the end of reading *Present to Past*, one is left wanting more—separate essays, for example, on language issues, on special education, and on middle schools, topics that are raised, but not elaborated. But this is a sign that Allison has indeed hit upon a mode of discourse that makes sense as a way to illuminate the present by clear-eyed examination of the past.

At the end of his introductory essay Allison makes one of his only editorial injunctions, encouraging teachers to consider the rewards and dangers of finding “your own way of becoming a teacher who challenges the traditional purposes of the public schools” (p. 21). Readers of Allison’s *Present and Past* will find much to aid them in that consideration.

Theodore R. Mitchell  
University of California, Los Angeles

Eric W. Ricker and B. Anne Wood, eds., *Historical Perspectives on Educational Policy in Canada: Issues, Debates and Case Studies*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 1995. Pp. 298. Can\$24.95 paper.

This volume is a tribute to the tenacity of the editors, the authors of the sixteen essays and commentaries, and the Canadian History of Education Association/ Association canadienne d’histoire de l’éducation (CHEA/ACHE). The papers are drawn from the program of the Fourth Biennial CHEA/ACHE Conference held in Halifax, Nova Scotia 17–19 October 1986. That almost ten years has passed between presentation of the papers and their publication is attributable, the editors explain, to “funding and technical problems” (p. xv).

The delay forced editors and authors to make difficult choices and to deal with two major challenges. The first was to re-think the purpose of the book. The initial idea was to publish the complete proceedings of the conference. That goal, unfortunately, proved unattainable. Instead, the editors present readers with sixteen essays and commentaries, organized around seven themes. A second challenge had to do with revisions. Over the intervening decade, in the course of their teaching and research, many of the authors have significantly extended the themes outlined in their papers. The editors chose to publish “the exact same papers that were delivered at the conference” as a “record of the conference rather than to risk a further publication delay by asking the contributors to revise or update their work” (p. xiii). The editors state that it is their belief “that the long delay has not diminished the value of [the contributors’]