

and purposes had to be debated. And for Cremin, a broad public discussion over the scope and purpose of American education was long overdue. Questions like what knowledge or what values, skills, or sensibilities the public school should transmit could not be answered until the larger questions of what it means to be an American, the kind of society Americans want to live in and want their children to live in, and hence what they are prepared to have the public school teach their children were publicly debated. For Cremin, such questions were at the heart of the crisis of American education; public debate was necessary because the American *paideia* was still in the making. Here was a role for history and the historian of education.

Cremin was troubled by the poverty of public discourse on education in the United States. His project, at least since his *The Genius of American Education* (1965), was marked by a distrust of the "experts" and a profound commitment to public dialogue, to better public conversation about education. Cremin would not allow the world of American education to be historically unintelligible to his fellow citizens. The historian's responsibility was to encourage or enlarge and inform the "[educational] conversation and the dialogue in the public sphere." This is what Cremin meant when he insisted that "history should be a lamp to light the present." The responsibility of the professional historian was to make educational history accessible and relevant to the lay public and to educational policy-makers. To Cremin, Nietzsche's claim

that "history is a costly and superfluous luxury of the understanding" was an utter falsity. History was the discipline par excellence which helps to shape our conception of the past and how the present has emerged from the past. History was, above all other disciplines, indispensable in developing an ever more sophisticated and accessible public knowledge about public education. And thus history would help effect a responsible transition to an ever more effective democratic education in the future. This was the burden and the opportunity of the historian of American education.

Cremin preferred to quote Socrates rather than Nietzsche. He was fond of quoting Socrates' "the unexamined life is unfit to be lived by man." And it is this, he was wont to say, that propels us to study the past, even though we can never know it fully. Lawrence Cremin is greatly missed.

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**Angus McLaren.** *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945.* Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990. Pp. 228. \$16.95.

Angus McLaren's *Our Own Master Race* is the first work to provide a history of Canadian eugenics. It is long overdue. McLaren joins a group of distinguished historians who have examined the impact of this im-

portant movement on social policy, namely: Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (1944, 1955); Mark Haller, *Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (1963); Kenneth Ludmerer, *Genetics and American Society: A Historical Appraisal* (1972); Hamilton Craven, *The Triumph of Evolution: American Scientists and Hereditary-Environment Controversy* (1978); and Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Use of Heredity* (1985). In spite of excellent studies on American eugenics and related issues, the Canadian movement has remained cloaked in silence until this landmark publication.

McLaren establishes eugenics as a major influence on Canadian social thought in the first half of the twentieth century. He counters the popular assumption that eugenic ideas did not penetrate Canada or that they were of minor significance. He demonstrates that eugenics was, to the contrary, widely accepted by elites and policy-makers and that it was also inextricably reflected in policies associated with immigration, public health, education, and social welfare.

Canadian eugenics was part of the international fascination with hereditarian explanations for crime, poverty, and disease. The term "eugenics" was coined in 1883 by Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin and founder of the eugenics movement in Britain. Other eugenics movements followed, in the United States, Western Europe, and Canada. Eugenics refers both to a set of ideas about human inheritance derived from the science of genetics and to the social

movement of the same name. It was conceived, McLaren points out, as an applied science whose stated goal was to improve the biological quality of the human race. The movement quickly took on the character of a politically motivated crusade.

McLaren notes that the movement "was primarily a product of a turn-of-the-century surge in anti-democratic and anti-egalitarian sentiment." Eugenists argued that they had "scientific 'proof' of the inferiority of the lower classes" (p. 19). "Negative eugenics" sought to restrict the reproduction of the "unfit" and "positive eugenics" sought to promote the reproduction of the "fit" through selective breeding. Eugenics was abandoned by most knowledgeable researchers by the 1930s as scientific theories on inheritance became more sophisticated and as the political misuse of genetic arguments became more obvious. Canadian eugenics, nonetheless, flourished in the 1930s even as scientific legitimation faltered. The Canadian movement during this period was more successful than the British movement, for example, for in Canada eugenic laws permitting involuntary sterilization were passed in British Columbia and Alberta.

Following McLaren's earlier contributions to the history of birth control and family policy, *Our Own Master Race* adds to Canadian women's history. McLaren notes that "there was also an obvious anti-feminist element" to eugenics (p. 19). Child and family policy became inescapably intertwined with eugenic concepts about preventive health care and welfare. Strong supporters of eugenics in fami-

ly policy include: Helen MacMurchy, who in 1920 became first chief of the Division of Maternal and Child Welfare in the Department of Health; Charlotte Whitton, executive secretary of the Council on Child Welfare; and Elizabeth Shortt of the National Council of Women. Canada's "leading human geneticist and the most important scientific defender of eugenics" was a female scientist, Madge Macklin (p. 128).

McLaren is at his best in his biographical descriptions of individual eugenicists, especially its leading women advocates, MacMurchy and Macklin. McLaren gives an extraordinary if highly critical account of MacMurchy, for example, who was a pioneer in Canadian public health. She was the first female doctor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the Toronto General Hospital. She also lectured in Medicine at the University of Toronto, and was a successful bureaucrat and policy-maker in both Ontario and federal government circles. McLaren accords MacMurchy much deserved attention as a major factor in shaping Canadian family, health, and welfare policy in this century. He presents a more sympathetic but no less dramatic account of the trials and shortcomings of Madge Macklin, wife, mother, and genetic researcher at The University of Western Ontario (1921-45), who was one of the original organizers of the Eugenics Society of Canada in 1930, where she served as executive secretary and then director in 1935.

The Canadian eugenics "crusade" had a broad base. In keeping with the observation that historically Canadian

leadership was characterized by a network of collaborative elites, individuals in key leadership positions played major roles in the spread of eugenic ideas. While the politics of eugenics were generally conservative, surprising advocates from the left can be counted, such as James F. Woodsworth, founder of the socialist political party, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation [C.C.F.], as well as popular C.C.F. organizer Thomas C. Douglas, who was premier of Saskatchewan and also first leader of the New Democratic Party. Both saw eugenics as a rational approach to the elimination of corruption and inefficiency brought on by poor health and poverty.

Numerous voluntary organizations promoted eugenic social policies. These included the Nova Scotia League for the Care and Protection of Feeble-minded, the Conference of Charities and Corrections, the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene, the Y.W.C.A., and the Social and Moral Welfare League. These groups enhanced popular fears about subnormal populations which reinforced the actions of eugenic-minded officials.

Canadian immigration and federal and provincial health policy was dominated by eugenicists like John Amyot, Deputy Minister of Health; Peter Bryce, Medical Officer of the Department of Immigration; J.D. Pagé, Chief Medical Officer of the Port of Quebec, who was also Chief of Quarantine; and H.E. Young, Secretary of the Provincial Board of Health of British Columbia. Eugenic policies were legitimated in public

schooling through figures such as Young who was interested in both health care and education. Others, such as Peter Sandiford, professor of psychology at the University of Toronto, legitimized eugenic policies associated with mental testing in public schools across Canada.

The eugenics movement epitomizes the contradictions inherent in twentieth-century social policy which were not unique to Canada. The progressive humanistic zeal of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century with its naturalistic rhetoric of the perfectibility of man was countered by a doomsday stress on impending racial and social deterioration. Inherent in progressive and radical reforms were often policies which reified the objectivity and rationality of science, yet zealot advocates were often biased and irrational in their adherence to theories which had no scientific grounding and which were tainted as racist, sexist, and elitist.

Why did this movement make "good sense to many Canadians?" Why have Canadians been "preoccupied with the dangers of racial inefficiency and social inadequacy?" (p. 9). These questions underlying McLaren's study are answered on a biographical level in a more satisfying way than at the level of the relationship between biography and ideas as a product of their social context. Ludmerer (1987) reminds us that after World War II eugenic perspectives began to appear "naive and sinister" as popular premises about personal success and failure leaned toward an environmental orientation with a stress on nurture rather than nature.

McLaren's interpretation of the Canadian movement makes it appear less naive and more often sinister. He convincingly portrays leading eugenicists as hypocrites. Yet eugenics was a product of its time and must be understood as such if we are to recognize the forms which eugenic ideas assume today. It is important to draw out and further explore the historical context in which eugenicists made judgements, especially false ones, in order to understand better the legacy of hereditarian ideas and their relationship to other social movements and policies in the latter half of this century. McLaren provides us with a first and necessary step toward this goal.

The continuity of international eugenics in Canada as well as the unique character of aspects of the movement in the Canadian context need to be further investigated in that hereditarian perspectives are in many ways inseparable from the history of Canadian public health, education, and welfare. McLaren raises especially provocative questions in his preface and prologue. Canadian eugenicists, reformers, and zealots shaped debates which continue today over a variety of topics such as the selectivity of immigration regulations, the adequacy of provisions for health care including family welfare, birth control, sex education, and disease control. Special services in schools and provision for adult handicapped populations are contemporary issues with a history in humanistic as well as eugenic theory. Debates over the role of heredity in personal achievement and the meaning of ethnic, racial, and cultural differen-

ces are at the heart of current controversies over multiculturalism, language, and national destinies. We are a long way from understanding the full implications of hereditarian ideas.

This book is highly recommended. It suggests productive areas for research and would serve as a provocative text for discussion in upper division and graduate courses concerned with social history and policy. In the final analysis it is essential reading for social historians and for everyone interested in health, education, and welfare policy in Canada.

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**J.J. Fletcher.** *Clean, Clad and Courteous: A History of Aboriginal Education in New South Wales.* Sydney: J.J. Fletcher, 1989. Pp. 375, 24 illus., map, index. \$30.00.  
**J.J. Fletcher.** *Documents in the History of Aboriginal Education in New South Wales.* Sydney: J.J. Fletcher, 1989. Pp. 272, index. \$25.00. (Available from Jim Fletcher, 45 Bibby Street, Carlton, NSW, Australia 2218.)

In Australia, as in Canada, the question of the history of aboriginal education has emerged as a matter of much public debate. Aboriginal documentaries, memoirs, and public discussions have brought back to life the unpleasant and destructive experience of aboriginal children in white-run schools across the country.

To a rather surprising extent, however, Australian academics have not responded to the obvious community need to examine and analyze the historical experience of aboriginal schoolchildren. J.J. Fletcher, in a two-volume, handsome self-published set of books, has turned his attention to the situation in New South Wales, producing a useful introduction to this most important theme.

Fletcher's work, as is often the case for first forays into new fields, is heavily administrative in content. The reader is offered detailed assessments of the Aborigines Protection Board and the Aborigines Welfare Board, plus extensive commentaries on the legislative and administrative initiatives of key New South Wales administrators. Fletcher does not ignore the experience of the schoolchildren—there are short discussions of such issues as discipline, classroom instruction, and different forms of Aboriginal protest against school practices—but this is not the dominant focus of his study. His interest is primarily administrative, and he handles this aspect of his study with thoroughness and competence.

In pursuing this objective, Fletcher carefully delineates the continual tension between government parsimony, the perceived need to educate Aboriginal students, and white resistance to having their children taught with Aborigines. The balance, he argues, continually worked against Aboriginal interests, producing an educational system that was inferior in almost all respects and that was, in the social ferment of the 1960s, dismantled along with other vestiges of