

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

official discrimination. If there is a major gap in this study, it lies in the lack of attention to the process of cultural destruction inherent in the assimilationist agenda of the state school system. He offers brief assessments of curriculum development and efforts at assimilation, but does not deal in sufficient depth with what may well be the key question in the history of Aboriginal education. Questions which now dominate commentary on indigenous education in Canada, including the insistence that English be spoken, strict discipline, explicit criticism of indigenous cultures, and sexual and physical abuse, are not systematically addressed.

Canadian scholars of the education of First Nations children will find much of interest in these two volumes. The collection of documents contains the inevitable state pronouncements and legislation, but also includes a variety of reports and comments by teachers, school administrators, and parents. The documents provide a useful starting point for comparative consideration of policy and response, and are particularly valuable for scholars without access to original Australian sources. *Clean, Clad and Courteous*, the substantial and detailed historical study, offers important information for those interested in developing comparisons with Canadian experiences. Fletcher does not himself pursue such comparisons and his study lacks a strong theoretical or interpretative focus. His intention, clearly delineated in the introduction, is to report on the poor quality of schooling for aboriginal children and to place the education process firmly within a

broader pattern of Australian discriminatory legislation and attitudes toward Aborigines. He accomplishes these somewhat limited goals nicely, leaving others to build more theoretical studies on the solid foundation he has provided.

Most studies of the Canadian and Australian educational experience with indigenous minorities are based on the implicit assumption that these situations represent unique national responses to the needs of indigenous children. While we are increasingly aware of regional variation in Canada (readers interested in the northern experience of Aboriginal education in Australia might wish to consult A. Marcus' book, *Governing Savages*), we have not paid a great deal of attention to the comparative aspect of indigenous education. As even a quick read of Fletcher's work reveals, the timing, nature, and content of Aboriginal education did not differ substantially from Canadian initiatives for Native children. Early efforts focused on the creation of skilled tradespeople, there were long-standing debates about the value of residential versus community-based schooling, and the post-war era saw the introduction of a variety of assimilative and integrative measures. These two books, and work by Henry Reynolds, Marcus, and others, suggest that Canadian scholars of indigenous history and the history of education have much to gain by considering the broader, comparative implications of their studies.

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