

Education and Ethnicity

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The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (6th edition) defines ethnicity as "gentile, heathen." Obviously, the term has taken on an entirely different meaning. In fact, it does not appear at all, in the sense that we presently use it, in the 1969 edition of the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, although it does appear in the 1973 edition. There, it is defined as "1. The condition of belonging to a particular ethnic group; 2. Ethnic pride," utilizing both an objective and subjective condition.

In any case, "ethnicity" has become a hot item in academic circles. An increasingly large number of articles and books have dealt with various aspects of the topic, some dealing exclusively with the term itself. Inevitably, the phenomenon has spread to Canada, and recently *Canadian Ethnic Studies* presented a special issue entitled "Education and Ethnicity". It is not the usual practice of this journal to review periodicals, but such is the overwhelming interest in things ethnic that an exception has been made.

The issue contains 4 major pieces. The first, "Hutterite Education in Alberta: A Test Case in Assimilation, 1920-1970", by Robert Macdonald, was written for another occasion, and therefore should be excused if it does not readily tie in to the theme. The intention of the article is clear and deserves to be quoted in full:

In a report to the Manitoba Legislature in 1948, a Select Committee stated "The public school is the great melting pot from which emerges the model Canadian citizen. It provides the means whereby the individual may obtain a better enjoyment of life and may become a more useful citizen and may make some contribution to the community in which he lives." Several ethnic minorities have resisted this assimilative trend to a greater or lesser degree; the Hutterian Brethren have been prominent among those groups which have been most stubborn in their resistance. In this article, the cultural and educational conflict between the Brethren and the larger society of Alberta will be discussed. Specifically, this chapter will examine the attempts by the non-Hutterian community to assimilate the Brethren through the public school system, and thus remove the cultural and economic threat which the Hutterites posed. As will be indicated, these attempts have failed. (P. 9)

The discussion which follows is a competent, but unexciting, look at the political and administrative developments over the fifty-year period. Its value lies in the basic information conveyed in this descriptive exposition. Macdonald illustrates well the conflict between the two ideologies — open, secular society of the host group, and closed, religious society of the Hutterites; however, we get no further than a simple "us-them" confrontation (from whichever perspective one chooses to look at the situation). At no point do we get a clue to some possible avenues of resolution. Macdonald concludes:

Throughout this period, the public school has been seen as the means to end the threat and to assimilate the Hutterite. But attempts at assimilation have failed. And though government has recognized the folly of trying to assimilate the Brethren, in areas of rural Alberta the demand for doing exactly that has not lessened. (P. 21)

Thus we come full circle. We know more about the problem, but have received no help in going beyond the basic material.

This same situation exists for the second article. "The (Almost) Quiet Evolution: Doukhobor Schooling in Saskatchewan", by John Lyons, even though the articles present a good contrast in the eventual outcome. Where the Hutterites in Alberta rejected public schooling, the Saskatchewan Doukhobors have accepted that fact of modern industrial life. Lyons argues that "the tolerant approach of the provincial government" (p. 34) accounted for much of the success in obtaining the cooperation of the Doukhobors. We might suggest that the lack of economic threat by the Doukhobors made it easy for the government to be tolerant, especially if we compare the attitudes to the Hutterites. Would the Hutterites have had the same treatment if they had settled in Saskatchewan? The historical experience of other large groups suggests that they would not. What real threat were the few members of "an obscure Russian pacifist sect" (p. 23) to a society that had "tamed" the Francophone and Metis?

The third major piece, by William Shaffir, "The Organization of Secular Education in a Chassidic Jewish Community", shifts the scene to the East, specifically Montreal, but continues the trend of thought. Here again we receive a great deal of helpful information on a particular ethnic group, but the article falls short on larger concerns. Compare this paragraph to the perspectives of the other two works:

In contrast to ethnic-based communities, those communities organized around a religious base have more successfully maintained their distinctive lifestyle, and have ensured that the young are socialized into the community's way of life. To accomplish this goal, such communities create a way of life that is both tenable and attractive to the members, in order to disinterest them from leaving while, at the same time, committing them to stay. The community must effectively impress upon its members that the surrounding society's seemingly attractive features are, in fact, potentially harmful to their distinctive lifestyle. (P. 50)

Note that the previous pieces both affirm and deny this proposition. Shaffir does make, however, one excursion into wider fields, by briefly discussing the idea of "intentionality." He posits that religious-based communities are highly intentional, while ethnic-based communities are less intentional. As such, Shaffir argues, religious-based communities are better able to utilize and coordinate "identity-shaping mechanisms," and therefore are better able to resist assimilative forces.

These three papers all deal with small, religious communities. I have used them in my course on the Education of Minorities in Canada, and students found them useful, in so far as they passed along a certain amount of information with which they were not familiar, however, except for that one paragraph by Shaffir, none of the authors suggest how these descriptions are generalizable, that is, how they relate to the study of ethnic groups in Canada. How, for example, does this information on religious communities affect our understanding of the interaction of majority and minority groups? Can we infer from these experiences how groups such as the Ukrainians or Francophones or native peoples related to the dominant British Society, or even what factors we might look to if we wished to study the relationships? What do they tell us about the present situation, or about future possibilities? Clearly, what the articles lack is a framework for analysis — a social theory of minority groups — that would provide the basis for comparison. As such, the reader will find them interesting, but not particularly valuable.

Joti Bhatnagar's psychological study of immigrant children is better. He lays out six causal factors that affect educational attainment (ability, cultural shock and culture conflict, language, social interaction, lack of appropriate education,

and administrative and pedagogical action). The paper is primarily a bibliographic essay, and so is especially useful to the casual reader or one interested in comparative research. My main criticism is that it draws heavily on British and American research without outlining what similarities or differences might exist in Canadian society. Surprisingly, in fact, it omits reference to Aaron Wolfgang, ed., *Education of Immigrant Students* (1975), which would have provided some good Canadian material, and which is easily available. Bhatnagar's conclusion is very pessimistic:

We are far from solving the problem of helping a culturally different immigrant child feel wanted, socially acceptable, and have a healthy self-concept without relinquishing his cultural identity. Greeley (1971) has made a strong case for maintaining ethnic differences not only because they might help the immigrant child but because they enrich the host culture. Maintenance of ethnic differences, however, does not seem to be conducive to social acceptance. Multiculturalism appears to be a distant dream indeed. (P. 66)

Two short pieces follow — the more interesting being the one by Rick Ogmundson and Donna Dasko, "Americanization and Higher Education in Canada: Recent Developments in the Arts Faculty at the University of Manitoba." They attempt to study the spread of non-Canadian professors in the University. One can divide the results into 3 main periods (their own division is different, but the following is, I think, more useful): up to 1955, heavy proportion of Canadian professors; 1955-72, rapid decline; 1972-75, slow decline. It is the final figure, of course, that might be considered surprising. Even during this period of increasing sensitivity to non-Canadian, especially American, appointments, the trend has continued. Particularly significant was the continued decline at the Assistant Professor level at a time when a large number of well-qualified Canadians are graduating and not finding academic positions. The raw data is revealing, but we need to know more, such as their graduate institutions (Ogmundson and Dasko looked only at first degrees from the University Calendar), what courses are taught by which group, and what orientations are used. For example, in the departmental breakdown, Sociology was noted as "holding steady," but there has been a great deal of concern expressed, in some circles, over American techniques used in research, etc. Also, they need to counter the argument that such criticisms of Americanization are simply attempts at protection against foreign imports, much as economic sectors cry out for protection. As a Research Note, using the data, it would be helpful in bringing out such questions in a class discussion.

Klaus Burmeister reports the results of his *Third Language Survey in Regina Schools 1973*. He asked four questions of students in grades 7 through 12 to investigate grass-roots interest in third languages. Those questions were:

1. Do you favour language instruction other than English and French in school? [Negative responses were not evaluated further.]
2. Would you like to have the opportunity to study German, Russian, Spanish, Ukrainian, Other (Specify)?
3. Would your parent(s) support your choice to study this third language?
4. In your opinion, should this third language be available in grade (grades 4-12). Check one. (P. 78)

Approximately 30% of the students had no interest in studying a third language. Of those who did express an interest, the following sequence of choices are listed:

1. German	44%
2. Spanish	29%
3. Other	12%
4. Ukrainian	10%
5. Russian	6% (P. 79)

Compare these figures to the distribution of population by ethnic group in Regina according to the 1971 census:

British	46.5%
German	23.4%
Slavic	8.9%
French	4.4%
Other	16.9% (P. 77)

The real surprise is the interest expressed in learning Spanish which was not at the time offered at any school in the city. While Burmeister notes this aspect, he does not even attempt to speculate on possible reasons for this choice. Even though this is simply a Research Note, there is not enough information provided to talk intelligently on the subject. In the Ogmundson and Dasko piece, we can ask some searching questions from the data, and apply them to individual or general situations; however, the same is not true for Burmeister. More information or ideas are needed before the article has any particular relevance.

Included in the issue is a very good bibliography on "Canadian Cultural Pluralism and Education", compiled by John Mallea and Leila Philip. It is divided into four sections: general bibliography; cultural pluralism; immigrants; and language learning. *Canadian Ethnic Studies* contains a large number of bibliographies as policy, much to the benefit of all students of ethnic studies, and this one will be a welcome addition. Everyone will have his own quibbles, but these differences are largely unimportant. Here are some of mine: while they include two works by David Pratt on textbooks, they do not list his most accessible piece on the subject (in E. Zureik and R. Pike eds.), *Socialization and Values in Canadian Society*); the Proceedings of the second Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism conference (reviewed in this same issue) are not there; no mention is made of Paul Migus (ed.), *Sounds Canadian* (also reviewed); Marilyn Barber's article on the Ontario Bilingual Schools Issue is included, while several other easily accessible articles on the same topic such as those by Peter Oliver and Margaret Prang, are not; and, most surprisingly, one might assume from the bibliography that *This Magazine* did not exist or that it has not ever had any relevant articles.

The last short piece is a very good review by Jorgen Dahlie of the Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism conference, including information on obtaining copies of the proceedings, the source of an alternative review, as well as the programme agenda. A number of the contributions will be valuable both for general interest and for course material.

Finally, there are nearly twenty short notes on current works. Most of these could do with greater amplification.

The best piece in the issue is the Introduction by Cornelius Jaenen. Jaenen presents an overview which is both informative and provocative. For example, while agreeing that education should not necessarily be seen as the steady

march of progress, he argues that "revisionist" historians have largely ignored religious and linguistic themes, blaming their American orientation for this omission. Would that the articles which followed had lived up to the high quality of the Introduction! It is a game attempt to tie together the articles on the theme, but, in a sense, his efforts are wasted, as the papers fail to deliver on his promises.

In summary, the issue displays good variety, and is generally entertaining, but lacks the conceptual focus that would give it real value.¹

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A. B. Cobban, *The Medieval Universities: their development and organization*. London, Methuen & Co., 1975. Pp. x, 264, \$36.95.

Can another book on the medieval universities offer something new? What more can be said after historians like Kibre, Gabriel, Smalley, Hastings and Rashdall? Cobban effectively deals with these problems by concentrating on the institutional structure of the medieval schools. Escapades of student life or the eloquence of famous masters do not dominate the narrative. By concentrating on the legal and statutory basis undergirding the universities the author provides a needed corrective to our understanding of them. Day to day life depended on accounts, administrators, fellowships, organizations and understood laws. Medieval education, even when exemplified by such traditional types as Paris, Oxford and Bologna, survived constitutionally. Knowledge for knowledge sake may have concerned Lupus of Ferrieres in his famous letter to Einhard, but it was not a compelling motive in the universities of later time. The investigations produce at least two unique results. Cobban, while admitting that no exhaustive study of the medieval colleges exists, presents convincing arguments that they emerged for practical not ideological reasons. Even more sobering is the revelation that medieval student power aimed at conservative rather than radical objectives. It was more a question of getting one's money's worth than of ideals traditionally associated with the ivory tower. Carefully avoiding the more dramatic documents left by over active students, his study brings a much needed realism to our understanding of the medieval universities. Thanks to his efforts we are in a much better position to assess the "average" experience which they offered to their clients. Serious students of the subject will be pleased with the extensive footnotes.

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¹By comparison, see John Porter, "Ethnic Pluralism in Canadian Perspective", in Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (eds.), *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975.