

BOOK NOTE

Canadian Teachers' Federation. *Key Characteristics of Teachers in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in 1972-73 to 1979-80*. Prepared in co-operation with the Education, Science and Culture Division of Statistics Canada, Ottawa, 1981. Pp. 168. \$5.00.

This report on certain dimensions of change in the Canadian teaching force over a seven year period is a useful and interesting enough document. Its highlights include the information that:

- There has been a reduction in median class size, from 27 to 24 . . .
- The proportion of principalships held by females has decreased from 17 to 13 per cent . . .
- The proportion of full time teachers under 25 years of age has decreased from 17 to 4 per cent, and of teachers under 30 from 44 to 23 per cent.
- The proportion of teachers with at least one degree has increased from 52 to 75 per cent (Alberta leads with 91% in 1979-80).

The time series tables which compose most of 168 pages of the report are presented in such a way as to ensure that subsequent annual surveys can be added when available. As this is to be a continuing endeavour, its limitations are the more serious.

First, of the seven categories of data, one is entitled "Languages of Instruction Used in Schools" but reports only on English, French and a combination of English and French in instruction. Lupul's recent protest against failures of the 1971 policy of "multi-culturalism within a bilingual context" seems well taken when in 1981 Statistics Canada still confines its reporting of languages of instruction to French and English. Yet despite the alleged failures of multi-culturalism, children in this country are being taught (at least in part) in Chinese, Cree, German, Hebrew, Ukrainian, etc. and a meaningful report on language of instruction in the seventies would report on this phenomenon. If a complete picture on languages can only be obtained by going beyond the public schools, should that not also be done?

The reporting of statistics on class size is equally confined to conceptualizations of an earlier era. Tables are presented for teachers assumed to be instructing in "mixed grades" a situation popularly discussed in pejorative terms. Yet an uncounted number of teachers across Canada are voluntarily teaching mixed age classes in "family" groupings. These classes in most cases were established under the influence of outstanding English infant schools and a case could be made that some of the most successful teaching in Canadian elementary schools takes place in such classes. It creates largely meaningless sets of data to lump these together with classes where, due to falling enrolments, many teachers are now unenthusiastically taking up the burden of teaching mixed grades.

Despite the neatness of being able to fit new data into old categories, I would suggest that the categories used are already too old to reflect important aspects of contemporary Canadian education and should be revised for future use.

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