Another possibility is offered by Ronald Manzer in *Public Schools and Political Ideas: Canadian Educational Policy in Historical Perspective* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994). Manzer, a political scientist, presents 150 years of educational policy-making in a tightly-organized, well-written and easily digestible manner. Manzer's approach, however, is all policy and no action. He ignores crying children, bored teenagers, angry parents, stressed-out teachers – all the over-wrought participants in the school dramas of the past 200 years.

So we continue searching for ways to unite the concerns of educational history and contemporary policy-making. Unfortunately, despite some fine individual articles, Ricker and Wood's *Historical Perspectives on Educational Policy in Canada* fails to bridge the chasm. Meanwhile, Dalhousie University's department of education has been abolished, a victim of policy makers!

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Crawley, M. (1995). *Schoolyard Bullies: Messing with British Columbia's Education System.* Victoria, BC: Orca Book Publishers, 186 pp. (Softcover).

Year 2000 was a 1990 plan for sweeping progressive reform of elementary/secondary education issued by the British Columbia Ministry of Education. It was largely inspired by the recommendations of the Sullivan Royal Commission on Education which had reported in 1988. *Schoolyard Bullies* chronicles and critically reviews events and principal characters in the British Columbia *Year 2000* drama. Crawley has manifestly done his homework as an investigative reporter/researcher. One of the real strengths of this book is the breadth and scope of perspective it offers from key players in the *Year 2000* scenario. *Schoolyard Bullies* packs an impressively rich, thick, and multi-perspective description of what happened to elementary and secondary education in British Columbia in the wake of the Sullivan report (1988) into its slim 180 pages.

Bullies is eminently readable. Cast in journalistic rather than academic style and format, the book is much more accessible to noneducationist audiences than are most books focused on particular

educational policy issues or educational policy dramas. On the other hand, the quality of Crawley's writing is variable, even within the accepted rubrics of journalistic prose. Although, on the whole *Bullies* is well and incisively written, it is awkward in places and its organization is not a strong point. Overall, the text reads well, but stylistic signs of haste are evident.

There are two major problems with *Bullies*. First is Crawley's seemingly too pliable – nearly amorphous, in fact – critique of the *Year 2000* process and its aftermath. Second is his tendency to reduce British Columbian's rejection of the *Year 2000* process because he perceives its architects intended something other than what was understood by the public. The reason for the misunderstanding was poor communication, poor implementation, and political exploitation. Perhaps the most telling insight Crawley brings to his critique, however, is precisely the need for implementation theorists to take account of politics in both their critical enterprise and in their implementation prescriptions. A key lesson Crawley extracts from the BC experience with *Year 2000* is the time-honoured, but mostly elided, one of the overweening importance of politics in any educational reform enterprise.

> Education is a political issue and, as a result, so is education reform. Not only do the change-makers need to ensure that staff accept the proposed reforms, the public must accept them as well or else in the political feedback loop that is democracy, the people at the top – the politicians – will extinguish the reforms with one quick puff. By ignoring the need to communicate to the public, the academic literature on education change assumes that the school system exists in a vacuum and that the political leaders in charge of the reforms don't have a stake in the way the public perceives the changes. (pp. 113-114)

Despite this eloquent burst of bedrock insight, Crawley closes his analysis with what comes close to a plea for some sort of disconnection between politics and educational reform. Citing University of British Columbia professor Marv Wideen's observation that what BC schools really need now is a "period of benign neglect" from politicians (p. 174), Crawley notes evasively that "benign neglect probably sounds like a good idea to many" (p. 175). He then concludes that "less interference would allow the best vestiges of Year 2000 to be nurtured and take hold in the system" and that "education battles – whether during or between elections – *must* [italics added] be fought on substantive issues, not slogans and sound bites and controversy" (p. 174). The latter prescription comes close to insisting

that politicians stop meddling and making political hay with educational reform. Or perhaps it is only a suggestion that educational footballers like Mike Harcourt at least not make long wild passes into the end zone like the famous "report card on Year 2000 is in and it's failed" declaration with which he kicked off the 1993 New Democrat Party (NDP) election campaign. After all, Crawley does allow that "ultimately, education is a political and ideological statement about how we want children to be" (p. 174).

An Achilles heel bares itself, however, in Crawley's critique of the policy substance of *Year 2000* itself and of the policy that distilled out of the "confusion, consternation, and chaos" (p. 75) surrounding the *Year 2000* process. The weakness is his rather facile acceptance of currently fashionable nostrums for righting the bark of public education and delivering at last on the ever-elusive goals of excellence and equity. Although he does not use the popular "excellence for all" oxymoron (Paquette, 1994, p. 228) he does use various semantic near-equivalents. One example will suffice:

> The Intermediate (or Graduation) Program is based on the belief that all students can learn and succeed and that no student should leave school without the knowledge and skills that are needed for work, community life or further learning. (p. 127)

To say that all students should leave school with the knowledge and skills needed for work, community life, or further education is, after all, quite a different thing from saying that "if a public school is working properly, it should allow kids [not all kids but a reasonable proportion of such kids] who don't have all the advantages – money at home, parents who care – to blossom and succeed" (p. 168). The former sweeping excellence-for-all prescription is utopian nonsense guaranteed to result in policy charade. The latter is an endorsement of the most important equity justification for public involvement in education.

Crawley's overall assessment of what is best in the *Year 2000* legacy from *A Legacy for Learners* (Sullivan, 1988) weaves its way quite eclectically and inconsistently between public-sector schools of choice (but not charter schools) and diverse curricula for multiple intelligences on the one hand, and core curriculum with subject focus and/or with subject integration on the other, between school and teacher accountability on the one hand, and student responsibility on the other. On balance, Crawley seems to favour (although not very clearly) pursuing the enigma of highly equitable diversity. In more ways than one, the implicit vision of

educational purpose and process which distills out of Crawley's analysis and critique is hauntingly similar to that embedded in Ontario's common Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1995). In such a vision, however, as Emberley and Newell suggest, there is little possibility that students can transcend solipsism or social conformity. Education with no or few canons, and again, on balance, that seems to be Crawley's preferred vision of educational policy and practice, "locks individuals in their own private worlds or, worse, merely mirrors back the tastes of global society" (Emberley & Newell, 1994, p. 47). Furthermore, equity becomes a largely empty concept when there is but minimal consensus on what students should know and be able to do. Where no convincing answer exists to the "equity of what" question, there can neither equity nor meaningful evaluation of equity.

If you want a compressed, lucid, and thoroughly interesting account of how the Sullivan commission report mutated into *Year 2000* and how *Year 2000* ran aground on the reefs of political reality, read this book. Do not, however, expect a coherent vision of what education in the year 2000 and beyond might become.

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