

25. Ravitch's treatment of the American 'discovery' is mildly sardonic (Chapter 7, *passim*).
26. See 'The Social Ideas of Canadian Educators', J. Macdonald, *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 9, #1 (February, 1965), pp. 38-45.

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Tkach, Nicholas, *Alberta Catholic Schools . . . A Social History* Edmonton: Publication Services, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta, 1983, 385 pp., \$12.00 (Paper)

In the past fifteen years Canadian educational historians have produced exceedingly few book length monographs in their field. The causes vary, but most relate to the revolution in the historiography of education which has been underway for most of that period. As educational historians began to act like "real" historians and even to influence the direction of mainstream history, and as the intricacies of the new social history unravelled, two outcomes became increasingly apparent. The first was that many educational historians became obsessed with the context which shaped their work - be it the history of ethnic studies, of children, agriculture or women - and slipped almost imperceptibly into what were formerly fringe areas of educational history. Judging from some recent essays in the historiography of education, there is considerable confusion about what now constitutes educational history, and who among the former faithful are still in the fold. A second result has been a great augmentation in standards that the academic community now expects of educational historians. The move into social history, and more and more quantified social history, has intensified this trend, and has demanded a seven fold increase in an effort to produce an acceptable piece of scholarship. The result has been that the new breed of educational historian often revels in minutiae, and cringes at the prospects of ever producing a monumental provincial history of education or, God forbid, a Canada wide monograph on the subject.

When it comes to writing provincial and national histories of education it is almost as though educational historians have self imposed the labors of Sisyphus, for the tyranny of recent historiographical developments has almost demanded that they write "total" history, that they pursue every stitch of context, and that they seek out every nuance in the half dozen or so fields into which educational history has subdivided. Add to these impositions the intrinsically more difficult preoccupation of writing history from the bottom up, and it should be apparent why "macro" histories of education in this country have been few and far between. The task, quite frankly, is intimidating.

Despite these obstacles, Nicholas Tkach has written a province-wide history of Catholic schools in Alberta. Divided into ten chapters, the study begins with the North West Territories, considers the efforts of missionaries, and then five periods of Alberta history, before discussing the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association and its blueprint for the future.

One of the most useful chapters deals with the Alberta Catholic Education Association (ACEA), an organization formed in 1947 to protect long standing Catholic rights and to promote parity with the public system. The creation of the large school divisions in the thirties and forties had facilitated the closure of many small Catholic districts, the bussing of their students to centralized, secular schools, and the redirection of Catholic assessment toward the secular system.

The best integration of Tkach's own research relates to the development of the Alberta curriculum which he studied as a graduate at The University of Montana in Missoula. The book provides a very rich collection of Alberta source material ranging from statistics on immigration, population, economic production, divorce, and drug abuse, to segments from the ACEA Bulletin, courses of study and several ordinances.

The book also contains an epilogue which details the work of the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association (ACSTA) in fostering Catholic education. This work has included the development of a spirit to

infuse the Catholic community with sense of purpose, the integration of the community to facilitate its growth to fullness in the understanding of Christ, and the generation of literature and scholarly work concerning Alberta Catholic education (of which this book is an example).

The strengths of the volume and Tkach's praiseworthy attempt to capture the long history of Catholic schools, notwithstanding, it is unlikely that the book will be well received by professional historians. Critics will claim that the work does not consistently address the issue of Church schools, that at least to chapter 8, it is perhaps more a general history of education, politics and economics than a monograph of Catholic schools, that the context stands too much on its own and is not carefully enough related to schooling. On a minor note, carpers will question Tkach's habit of quoting extensively from very old secondary sources and of ignoring a great deal of relevant recent work. Some will be annoyed at what they will consider the weak integration of cited material into the composition, the practice of isolating, indenting, and dropping the print point of quotations barely a line and a half long. Others will be dismayed at the heavy use of block quotations, sometimes comprising over half a chapter. These criticisms are partly trivial, and partly not.

From this reviewer's perspective, Tkach's implication that politics and economics were related to educational developments is well taken. However, regarding the UFA period, it should be clear by now that the central context and the most abiding problem of that government throughout all its years in power was the settlement disaster in the vast dry belt. This context - which was crucial to the emergence of the first genuine large school division in Berry Creek, to the next eight consecutive large divisions in the province and to the *raison d'être* of the Alberta Catholic Education Association - Tkach unfortunately, ignores.

Finally, in a book subtitled "A Social History", one might have expected some specific discussion of local school board problems and operations, more on the opposition to separate schools, especially by D.J. Goggin and the province's Loyal Orange Order in the 1895-1920 period, more on the role of the church in slowing the process of Canadianization and in promoting ethnic solidarity, and more on the Catholic reaction to the oft-held dominant protestant view that the Church was subversive and that its schools were not in the best interest of Albertans. These struggles and the attending discrimination and religious feuding would have made fascinating reading.

In Tkach's defence, it may be said that not everyone will judge the book from the viewpoint of admittedly trendy current historiography. Some will want a memorial to religious instruction in the province and to the steadfast opposition of the Roman Catholic Church, as one member put it, to a citizenry 'half way between paganism and Christianity.' Others will want a reaffirmation of the purpose of Catholic education under the leadership of the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association. These ends, the Church and the association may well consider Dr. Tkach to have achieved.

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