Whitty, G. (1985). *Sociology and school knowledge: Curriculum theory, research and politics*. London: Methuen & Co., 207 pp., $17.95 (paper).

Geoff Whitty's *Sociology and School Knowledge* provides a critical look at educational sociology and schools over the past twenty-five years. Whitty started teaching in the 1960s, an idealist who wanted schools to provide the just society. His book traces the rise and the radical "new" sociology of the early 1970s and examines its demise in the pragmatic, conservative 1980s. For those of us who taught during the 1960s, Whitty's work represents a nostalgic account of a passionate time in education and provides a critical review of the ideas and ideals that seemingly have lost their relevance.

Whitty's book is, of course, an account of education change in Britain, with examples from the United States and Australia added to make a point. Although his book is written from the perspective of the British working class, his analysis and ideas provide the opportunity to think about Canadian education.

Above all, Whitty is concerned with school knowledge and the fact that it is socially determined. The actual curriculum, Whitty points out, is one of many possibilities, in particular a choice that serves a social function. His challenge, then, is to expose the social function that dominates school curricula as one serving capitalist interests and not contributing to the just society that a free country deserves. This search takes Whitty into Marxist theory of society and the struggle of radical sociology to explain education in light of such theory.

The ultimate problem for Whitty is the curriculum. What is taught in schools maintains, if not directs, society. The school curriculum supports the ideology of a dominant class that requires a docile, obedient populace, well-skilled and well-intentioned to work on the industrial assembly line, a kind of thinking that the Americans labelled the hidden curriculum. What schools need, he argues, is a new perspective, one that looks at the content of the curriculum. To bring about this new perspective would require an active, radicalized Labour Party, dominated by working-class members of the labor movement.

There is an inherent attractiveness to Whitty's position, at least for one who believes in the just society. Further, his book makes for some serious reading, provocative and insightful. Whitty, a part of the radical sociology of education in 1970s, provides a look at a movement that failed. His examination of this movement adds to our understanding of the place of schools in society and to a more complete understanding of curriculum. For these reasons, Whitty's work is well worth reading.

Yet it is necessary to consider the society that Whitty is trying to reform from another angle, a North American perspective perhaps. Barry Franklin, writing in *Building the American Community* (Falmer Press, 1986) makes the point that the school curriculum was used in North America to develop not individual liberties but social stability and social control. As American society

moved from country to city and stretched to accommodate the variety of people who immigrated to the cities, the task of the schools was not to find the radical perspective of any one class of individuals but rather to find a way to make society function. This stability came from the development of a cohesion best fostered through the school curriculum.

Franklin's work reminds us not to take Whitty's argument as incontrovertible fact. The truth is that there is no absolute. Indeed, Whitty's society, dominated by a radicalized working class, would itself produce a dominating class, one that would have to be rejected by some new subjugated group. Remember the lesson of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

Nevertheless, Whitty's work is timely for those involved in the change phenomenon that currently characterizes Canadian society. During the past two years, I have been involved with the curriculum change process in Saskatchewan (Saskatchewan Education, *Directions*, 1984) and have watched similar developments in Alberta and Ontario. Each of these provincial change movements has stressed the importance of social equality and has given serious consideration to the place of minority groups within society. The basic, but not articulated, tenet held in these curriculum development projects is that minority people should become like the majority. The schools, then, have been charged with the task of finding a way to help the minority, disadvantaged people to fit into the system, middle-class and capitalistic as it might be. Whitty reminds us of a different approach, the prospective of changing the schools to fit these minority groups. There is no easy answer to the problem that Whitty presents to us, but he does remind us that school reform is indeed much more complex than recent efforts have realized and planned for. At least he may help explain our failures.

Sam Robinson
University of Saskatchewan

Jackson, Philip W. (1986). *The practice of teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 160 pp., $9.95 (paper).

In his book *The Practice of Teaching*, Philip W. Jackson explores educational thought and practice through six essays written, he says, "over a period of years" (xi). While one might expect from the title that Jackson is providing concrete recommendations on the "dos" and "don'ts" for successful teaching, it soon becomes clear that his intent is to stimulate thought and discussion rather than to provide answers.

Jackson's concern that teaching "be taken seriously, not only by its practitioners but by the world at large" (xi), is reflected in the writing style he employs. Using