

and avoid the national perspective. No new synthesis is presented here, but doors are opened to new ideas and new styles" (p. 1). A true comment but nonetheless, one that substantiates the point that a more modest title would have reflected the somewhat restricted scope of the book.

It has become a conventional cliché for reviewers to complain that collections of conference papers are uneven in quality. However, such is not so obviously the case in this instance. Although the papers reflect widely divergent styles and approaches all are significant contributions to a fuller understanding of Canadian educational history. Nor does it detract from the importance of the volume that the majority of the papers presented fall in the category described by the editor as "moderate revisionism" (p. 10). As Professor Sol Choen once commented on "radical revisionism" in an article in *History of Education* (quoted by Wilson p. 10): "There is a tendency [amongst the latter] to polarize and simplify, and to drift toward conspiratorial interpretation of events. There is a danger that past ideas and actions may be combined with the moral or social prejudices of the historian to produce a work that distorts the past in an attempt to castigate the past and to lecture the present". There are no such castigations in *An Imperfect Past*.

What emerges, is a pot-pourri of articles that ranges widely over the Canadian educational scene. To illustrate: one gains insight on such divergent topics as the extent of literacy in colonial Louisbourg (the sole article dealing with Atlantic Canada), a comparative analysis of the emergence of Domestic Science in early-twentieth century Ontario and Quebec, the "other side" of poet Duncan Campbell Scott — his role as a civil servant in the Department of Indian Affairs through to a first rate analysis of the "open ended oligarchies" (p. 166) fostered in Upper Canada by the venerable John Strachan. Although imperfectly titled, all who read *An Imperfect Past* will find that social and educational history can be illuminating, imaginative as well as scholarly.

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B. ANNE WOOD — *Idealism Transformed: The Making of a Progressive Educator*. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985. Pp. xiv, 232.

J.H. Putnam was one of the giants of Canadian education in the early decades of the twentieth century. Together with such leading reformers as James L. Hughes, John Seath, and James W. Robertson, Putnam laboured to transform the inherited educational systems into ones that responded to the needs of the new industrialized and urbanized society that was emerging in Canada during the period of their professional careers. The heavy emphasis placed by the schools on the academic side of education and, especially the stress on the classical curriculum, was, in their opinion, no longer appropriate for all children. Not only did this approach prevent the majority of children from advancing beyond the elementary school; what was even worse was that schools did not equip their graduates to secure rewarding employment.

What should the schools be teaching? What methodology should teachers be using? How should schools be organised and administered? These salient questions were troubling the minds of numerous educators at the turn of the century. The best known response to these queries has been labelled the New Education Movement. The purpose of this monograph is to describe how one Canadian educator, Putnam, became the most outspoken advocate and practitioner of this reform program.

Wood has concentrated most of her attention on the intellectual formation of her subject's mind. Essentially, this book is a study of how this educator acquired the mental lumber with which he set out to construct a school system in the city of Ottawa where he was the chief inspector of schools from 1910 to 1937. Beginning with his career as a teacher and progressive-minded municipal reformer in Ottawa, the author traces the impact on Putnam's mind of a whole host of philosophic ideas. He

early imbibed the Hegelian idealism taught by John Watson at Queen's University. Hegel's creed and its implications for the role of the schools in creating a properly ordered society became the touchstone of Putnam's life work as it did for many leading public spokesmen on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. As several other scholars have shown, Hegel's thought had an incredibly wide influence in the three or four decades before the First World War. To this heady brew, Putnam added congenial ideas from John Dewey's instrumentalism, Edward Hall's educational psychology, Frederic Taylor's scientific management theories, and somewhat incongruously, fervent British Canadian patriotism. Beneath all of this lay his upbringing in the Methodist Church which stressed the need to nurture with high moral standards persons who were prepared to regenerate society.

Putnam worked incessantly to translate these ideas into reality. Wood describes him as a practical idealist who possessed the requisite skills to persuade and cajole his co-workers into putting his schemes into action. Ottawa schools became educational laboratories where virtually every facet of the New Education Movement was tried. Manual training, domestic science, nature study, school gardens, courses in art and music, intelligence testing, the junior high school and, most importantly from Putnam's view, vocational education all made their way into the Ottawa schools. His aim was simply to expand the system so that it could accommodate the needs of the non-academic pupils and not cater to the university-bound students only. Throughout his career Putnam constantly fought for the rights of those students who had been bypassed by the traditional school system.

The predominant strength of Wood's discussion lies in her careful analysis of the various strands of the New Education Movement. She is acutely aware of the subtle shifts which occurred within the movement as it evolved over time from its original basis in idealistic philosophy and the idea of replicating the rural community in urban schools to a more scientifically oriented approach based on the need for efficient management of the schools and the testing of children. Equally important is her attempt to link this educational reform programme to the wider progressive movement in municipal and federal politics. Education reform is not seen as an isolated phenomenon but rather as a part of a larger social development. This book is one of the few attempts in Canadian educational history to try to accomplish this exacting and important task. And she succeeds very well.

There are two flaws in this monograph. The first flows from the way the author has arranged her material. She has used a topical treatment rather than a chronological one. This device, while it lets her develop each theme or aspect of Putnam's reform agenda, unfortunately forces her to repeat many of the philosophical arguments for these different initiatives. At times one becomes weary reading another short discourse on the application of Hegelian idealism to everything Putnam was doing. On the other hand, the discussion of his total philosophy in Chapter two is excellent and provides a good read. But this is a small matter.

The other weakness is perhaps more serious. While the reader is given an exhaustive analysis of Putnam's views, he or she will not learn very much about how Putnam transformed them into actual policies. What this reviewer wanted was to know how Putnam managed to attain so many of his objectives. Wood indicates that often his schemes provoked intense and bitter opposition in the Ottawa boards (both elementary and secondary) and that the Department of Education often referred to Putnam and his associates as "those Reds in Eastern Ontario." (What an incredible phrase! What a strange place to find Reds!) How did he overcome this opposition? Putnam is described by the author as "an astute politician" (p. xii). He had to be! But, there is no serious discussion of the techniques he used to outwit his opponents. Occasionally we are given tantalizing snippets of his political activities but never a full-scale treatment. The author has missed an excellent opportunity to develop a case study of the politics of education in one rather small jurisdiction, but one that had provincial and national importance. At one point Wood states that Putnam "had to resort to crass political tactics" (p. 195) to achieve his end. I suspect he relished the battle.

Aside from these criticisms the book really is a very valuable addition to the growing literature in Canadian educational history.

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