Reviews–Recensions

Charles E. Phillips, *College of Education, Toronto: Memories of OCE.* Toronto, Guidance Centre, University of Toronto, 1977

Coming to this book with the conviction that an alma mater is a parent that only her children could love, the reviewer was pleasantly surprised by a delightful reading experience. Dr. Phillip's book proves a difficult one to categorize, being partly the memoirs of a fifteen-year vetern of OCE (at which, *inter alia,* he was Director of Graduate Studies), and partly a systematic history of the institution from its origins in 1907 as the Faculty of Education, University of Toronto, full circle to the same nomenclature, with an examination, en route, of its metamorphoses into the Ontario College of Education (1921-1965), and the College of Education, University of Toronto (1965-1972). As can be expected in an institutional history of this sort, there are many stretches of detail that mean little to non-family and may be skimmed without great loss. At the same time, however, there are sections dealing with issues endemic to pedagogical institutions, which provide a valuable addition to a limited literature.

The memoir aspect of the book allows the author to take a frankly subjective assessment of the institution's development. With tongue at least partly in cheek, Phillips argues that he does not understand the present world of pedagogy (and, conversely, that younger pedagogues do not understand the world that has passed). This stance permits an almost ingenuous bewilderment over such modern phenomena as spend-thrift institutions, participatory democracy in academic decision-making and administration, and contemporary attitudes of students, academics and teachers. This stance he can assume without being cantankerous, by conceding that the contrasts of the present reflect different circumstances, not degeneration. "The writer, who knew the college and its programs well between 1921 and 1962 finds the program for the professional education of teachers as well designed to achieve its purpose as any program of the past, and probably more ingenious and interesting because of the more difficult times." (p. 80).

What does receive a consistent and timeless vituperation are the three themes of administrators, calendars and politicians, in whatever order.

> "To many of us it appears that administrators are unable to take action in anticipation of the future or to foresee the consequences of the belated and short-sighted remedies they devise in emergencies." (pp. 12-20)
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> " 'I was young and innocent then. I thought that calendars were prepared to help students, not to intimidate them' " (p. 44)
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> ". . . anyone whose mind is a bit lively should stay in a university position if he has one and keep his distance from politicians in power." (p. 105)

An uncharacteristic bitterness is reserved for the *external* detractors of education faculties. Stephen Lewis, for example, receives special treatment: "So much for the views – not all of them worthless – of a young man without the academic qualifications for

admission to OCE and with teaching experience in Africa." (p. 172). On many such occasions the reader is treated to the delightful openness that seventy-nine years of age can bring.

The author is by his training an historian and accordingly takes due care to paint the development of OCE against the backdrop of Toronto's development as a city (professorial wages, for example, are compared to those of other groups in the outside world). But because there is little comparison made to the development of other colleges or faculties of education, the reader is often left unsure as to whether the things described are unique to OCE or more broadly characteristic of the time. An example of this is in the description of the curious position in which the college found itself in being subject simultaneously to two masters, the university and the government. (The relationship to the latter is an interesting one, which Phillips felt led to rather too much provincialism, but not to a compromised academic freedom.) An equally interesting example was the curious institutional relationship between the college and the University of Toronto Schools.

Certain other issues are identified that have perplexed faculties of education across the country. Among these are the questions of the relative balance that should be accorded the "professional" courses, as opposed to "teaching methods in the disciplines." The author expresses an impatience with the academic snobbery that has traditionally tilted the scales toward the latter. ". . . the usual attitude was to respect scholarship in the academic subjects of the high school, but to have little regard for the professional studies not related to such subjects whether in the certificate program or in graduate studies." (p. 88). It is this bias, prompted no doubt by a desire for academic "respectability," that led to the second major issue the author identifies: ". . . concurrent versus consecutive programs of teacher education" (p. 183), and to the willingness the author laments in faculties of education to accept submissively the disparagement of academic "phonies".

Phillips provides a survey of the changing composition of the certification programs of the college, but unfortunately offers little detail about the actual content lying behind course titles, or of the quality of instruction in them. Being a gentleman, he reserves such analysis to his own course, but in so doing raises in the reader's mind some tantalizing speculation about the others:

> "But since the history and philosophy of education is my own field, I feel entitled to say here that it is a pretentious title for the necessarily superficial content which could be presented to a group of students of various academic backgrounds who are just beginning their professional study. One more use of a grandiose term for what has little substance ranks near the top of things not needed in education" (p. 66).

Similarly, the description of staff members tends to be anecdotal, and while the suggestion lurks throughout the book that the professors of old were in some aspects different in kind from their contemporary counterparts, the anecdotal approach does not lend itself to easy generalization. Consider, for example, the case of one George Bramfitt:

> George frequently voiced the opinion that there is some defect or weakness in the character of anyone who becomes a teacher. He definitely did not mean by this anything like his habit of failing to get back to school for the beginning of the fall term. (p. 139)

But, if generalization is not made easy, we are given some very useful portraits of the

succession of college deans, men like Pakenham, Althouse, Lewis and Diltz, who by the nature of their role contributed importantly to the shaping of teacher training in the province and across the country. Among the various controversies that embroiled the college leaders in the late 1960's, and in which Phillips himself took a strong stand, was that concerning the proposed removal of the research and graduate activities of the college and their transfer to what was to become the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. The principles lying behind Phillip's opposition to such a bifurcation of roles are very germane to present day discussions of the structure and functions of faculties of education.

As a result of extensive and frequently frustrating perusal of college calendars and sundry other college and government records, Phillips provides the student of institutional history with an extensive set of appendices which contain information on staff, salaries, enrolments, budget, the *School* periodical, the agreement with the University of Toronto, the Library School, and general bibliography. The elusiveness of such information does not escape mention:

> . . . the reader must not expect strict accuracy and consistency in financial data that are published. Such characteristics could make an administrator vulnerable, whereas a little flexibility weakens the confidence of critics (p. 197).

If Phillip's book has one over-riding theme, it is expressed in the final line of text: "The old days had passed away." (p. 195) Through this work we have a humane and balanced picture of what those days were.

Alexander Gregor
Department of Educational Administration
and Foundations
University of Manitoba

Bernard Ostry, *The Cultural Connection.* Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1978.

The author describes this work as a "tract" or an "essay". It is actually a compendium of facts and ideas concerning Canada's cultural experience set in historical perspective by a top-ranking civil servant. In his career, Bernard Ostry has run the gamut of direct involvement in government agencies and departments from the CBC and the Secretary of State Department to the sphere of the National Museums of Canada. At present, he is deputy minister in the Department of Communications where he is involved with the inevitable tug-of-war between the federal and provincial governments over control of various aspects of Canadian social and cultural development. The book is then a government official's eye-view, rather than that of someone actively engaged in that development. Ostry says it is an "essay on government and cultural policy in Canada". As such, it stresses the strong link between the active involvement of government in fostering a nation's culture and the furthering of national unity – an undeniably vital and topical issue for Canadians.

Culture is defined in very broad terms – it is all things to all men, including "artistic and creative expression or expressive symbolism, mores, manners and customs, ethnicity, and the social behaviour of distinguishing groups". It is as "essential" and as "pervasive" as the air we breathe, and therefore is taken too much for granted and too often overlooked as an important aspect of our national life, at least by democratic governments. Communist