

conclusion between the experiences of women at U.B.C. in the early years and the present day “chilly climate” for academic women, it is not clear why this study ends with the period following the Second World War. It would be interesting, and surely relevant, to know whether the introduction of women’s studies courses in the early 1970s followed the pattern that Stewart has documented in the cases of nursing and home economics. Stewart’s tantalizing study leaves the reviewer wanting to know more about the later period in which the Dean of Women came to be regarded as an anachronism, the names of women prominent in the early history of the university were forgotten, and the record of earlier lengthy debates over how best to achieve an equal education for women was obliterated. As a former undergraduate student in the first interdisciplinary women’s studies course offered at U.B.C., I remember participating in enthusiastic critiques of women’s education in a context where I and my classmates were ignorant of the history of women in our own institution and had little knowledge of their earlier struggles to define an equal education for women. Fortunately, because of studies such as this one, today’s students will not be condemned to a similar ignorance. *It’s Up to You* is an important contribution to contemporary debates about the issue of women in Canadian universities, and clearly has implications that extend far beyond the boundaries of one campus.

Axelrod, Paul. *Making a Middle Class: Student Life in English Canada During the Thirties*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill Queen’s University Press, 1990, 269 pp. Price: \$34.95. Reviewed by Nancy M. Sheehan, University of British Columbia.

Making a Middle Class is a breakthrough in the historiography of Canadian higher education. For the most part, the history of higher education in Canada has focussed on histories of single institutions. Axelrod’s study is a sign that this is changing. It is also a study of students, as opposed to the more traditional university history that concentrated on administration and perhaps a few colourful professors. Axelrod’s contribution, however, goes further with explicit attention to an underlying theory - a theory in three parts.

First, it bases the examination of the history of student life in Canada on a multi-institutional front using “middle class” as its organizing construct. Second, it does so with the theory of a three class system (working, middle, and

upper) and providing a classification of occupations (professional, business, supervisory, white-collar, artisan-skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled, and farming-fishing, pp. 174-177). Third, it defines middle class as families “whose major income-earners were non-manual workers who enjoyed social status but exercised limited economic power, and whose standard of living ranged from the very modest to the very comfortable” (p. 170). One may argue with the definition and classification, but admit that the construct of “middle class” provides a method of conceptualizing the students, culture, and climate of Canadian universities during the Depression.

Dr. Axelrod’s study focuses on students in universities in Canada in the 1930s. It pays attention to gender and ethnicity, to regional difference and size of institutions. It explores denominational influence, the growing needs of business and industry and the occupational careers and expectations of the graduates. Attention is paid to the academic and intellectual culture; social and extra-curricular activities; professional programs; campaigns for peace, justice and political change; and the impact of war. The author provides tables to accompany his analysis of who went to university, what programs they took, their fathers’ occupations, religious backgrounds, percentage of the age group who attended, participation by women and the national origin of the students.

To set this study of college and university students in the context of Canada in the thirties, Dr. Axelrod, in his first chapter “Youth, University and the Middle Class”, explores the origins, size and status of colleges, the transformation of Canada caused by industrialization, immigration and changing social needs, and the professionalization of numerous occupations. He includes a section on the “discovery of adolescence,” emphasizing in particular the excesses in behaviours so often perceived as part of the “roaring ‘20s” - at least in the U.S. and Britain - and the effect on Canadian students, their parents and professors. He analyzes the beginnings of a student culture and the development of a “generation gap.” Through these years of major change, the universities are expanding in numbers, programs and students. The stock market collapse of 1929 and the resulting decade-long Depression put a halt to this expansion, forced the universities to justify their existence and students to dig deeply to attain their goals. Dr. Axelrod’s analysis of the historical background to university life in the 1930s provides a contribution on its own as well as setting the tone for the rest of the study.

What sets Axelrod’s study apart from others on the history of universities in Canada is the emphasis on students. In addition, he has made a special effort to focus on women students, their numbers, backgrounds, programs, treatment by

professors and other students, and their aspirations. It becomes clear through the study that, although women were admitted to university, the purpose for educating women was unclear and they were tolerated on campus rather than encouraged. He provides evidence to show that women at universities in the '30s were patronized by professors who believed "they do not have the male's larger grasp of scientific problems and trends" (p. 91). Their movements were restricted by choice of residence (on campus or approved boardinghouses), by curfews and by inadequate facilities. Male students talked about women as "social butterflies", husband hunters and distractions "when we are trying to study" (p. 118). The general belief that all women would marry and have children, restrictions in many occupations on the employment of married women, and the notion that the fulfilled woman was a "knowledgeable and caring domestic organizer" (p. 119) affected university women. As one woman student put it: "...it has been said by many people that woman doctors lack self-confidence. Would it be any wonder if we did? Complete and justifiable self-confidence can come only with experience, responsibility and a sense of achievement" (p.72). Those were denied women students and women graduates. Because of such attitudes, teaching, social work, home economics and general arts were the choices of programs for most women. The women's rights movement of an earlier generation, which had won the right of women to higher education, either thought that once accepted the difficulties were over or left it to the university women to fight themselves. Many of the women, however, were there to get an education - not to fight equity battles. As well, their numbers were few and scattered throughout many small institutions.

What is particularly laudatory about Axelrod's treatment of women is that way in which he incorporates material on women throughout the monograph, in each chapter and into each theme, rather than in a separate chapter. He also looks at ethnic background and the phenomenon of admission quotas on certain groups. This attention to gender and ethnicity, as well as class, region and religion, is a strength of the work.

In a study such as this, it is not possible to include students at all institutions and the author indicates he tried to ensure that every region was represented. What is missing is reference to students at Catholic institutions. One might well ask if the programs, goals, and aspirations were comparable to those at Protestant institutions. What about gender and ethnicity, discipline, attention to Christian values, etc.? Was Catholic attitude toward higher education different? Although the size of these institutions was small, there were many in Eastern Canada. To omit them is to omit the making of the Catholic middle class.

The use of the construct of class and the definition of middle class need some discussion because the terms, although apparently neutral, have a gender-bias. Families are described as middle class if the major wage earners are in non-manual occupations. Given that women in the '30s were seldom the major wage earners, Axelrod's definition means that, for the purposes of this study, the term middle class is determined by the male of the family. Some women, although they may have been high school graduates, joined church and community groups and had aspirations for their children, are relegated to working class status within this definition because of marriage. For example, it was not uncommon for female teachers to marry farmers, artisans and semi-skilled workers. Clearly, women did not have social status in the '30s. Comments such as that of J.F. Macdonald, Robert Falconer and Carleton Stanley, that because teaching was becoming a women's occupation its "social standing" was lowered, reinforced this lack of status. Such comments and a definition of middle class which excluded women are ironic since teaching has been considered an avenue of upward social mobility for many - especially women.

Axelrod has dispelled the notion that universities in Canada at mid-century were institutions only for the elite, men and WASPS. He has given us a picture of the youth in Canada struggling with the Depression, their own futures, university authority and the changing political and moral climate. It is an excellent analysis of student life, community-university relations and academic and professional culture. It is a must for the serious student of higher education and of benefit to all who wish to further their knowledge and understanding of the development and impact of universities in Canada. And although it is a study of the decade of the '30s, to this writer who attended university in the '50s, not much had changed.

One last comment - the photos are wonderful and add to the analysis of the text. Dr. Axelrod has made a major contribution to our social history.

Book Notes

L.C. Barrows (ed.). *Higher Education in the U.S.S.R.* Bucharest: UNESCO, 1990.

This UNESCO Monograph reviews the state of higher education in the U.S.S.R. Chapters include an historical overview, descriptions of organizational patterns and management, discussion of student selection and composition, outlines of instructional and learning processes, issues in