

BOOK REVIEWS/RECENSIONS

THE FOURTH SECTOR: ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION IN AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND

J. Benseman, B. Findsen, and M. Scott (Eds.). Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.

In 1984 the New Zealand Labour government was hijacked by the radical right. Despite the glorious victory in the America's Cup, the stunning quality of recent film and other triumphs in international arenas, life in New Zealand now has a desperate quality. There's a new underclass, high crime rates and other indices of social despair. One in three children live below the poverty line. Mercifully, there is now growing anger concerning the excesses of the new-right and David Lange, the Prime Minister who gave tacit permission to slash and burn artists, admits they "went too far." Hence at the 1996 Adult Education Research Conference Law (1996) described New Zealand as "a cauldron of neo-Liberal 'new right' sorcery." With sorcerers in charge what happens to adult education? This is the question that this new book addresses. The answer is not pretty but the book is excellent.

It has been 16 years since the last attempt to provide an overview of adult education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The period covered by the earlier and more limited book (roughly the 1970s) is now seen as the halcyon days. Instead of becoming a "learning society" as the earlier book had predicted, there has been a deepening commitment to "vocationalism" in adult education, profound erosion of the social welfare system, increased government control through a state "qualifications authority," dramatically reduced spending on adult education, the dismantling of once "untouchable" cultural and arts institutions (c.f. CBC, NFB), the implementation of a proportional representation electoral system and, very importantly, a resurgence of Maori nationalism. This last development has had an enormous impact on adult education and just about everything else in Aotearoa/New Zealand. For example, these days "Nieuw Zeeland," a Dutch name given by a European explorer, is apt to be replaced by the Maori "Aotearoa"—land of the long white cloud. Aotearoa is both the name of a place and a discourse that constructs power relations in a bicultural society.

Benseman, Findsen and Scott have secured 25 chapters, five entirely concerned with Maori issues and several others with considerable relevance to Maori nationalism. They've done an excellent job. This is a timely and carefully crafted piece of work. In Canada, broadcasters have ensured that everyone is broadly familiar with what has been wrongly constructed as the "debt crisis" in New Zealand. Now Benseman et. al. have provided the adult education side of the story. Canadians "too busy" to get off their butts to halt the slash and burn artists in this country should read this book to see what might lie ahead.

Their title derives from the notion of four educational sectors: *early childhood education, primary and secondary education, higher education and adult and community education*. The book has six parts. "Part 1: Mapping the Field" contains chapters on the history and foundations of adult education in New Zealand. Jim

Dakin, former Director of Extension at Victoria University of Wellington, produced a similar chapter for the earlier book. Now nearly 90 years old and as sharp as ever, he is a great New Zealander and his is a steady hand on a constantly shifting target. What a pleasure to see him here. Tobias and Harre-Hindmarsh also display considerable flair in their contributions. Part 1 is an excellent beginning.

"Part 2: Te Kaupapa Akona no nga Iwi o Aotearoa" is about Maori issues and draws on diverse theory and perspectives. This section has considerable relevance to those interested in "cultural revitalization" nested in a conflict paradigm (e.g. Paulston, 1977) and there is much here that could inform theorizing about First Nations adult education in Canada. All these chapters are written by women.

"Part 3: Learning Contexts" is a solid section with a smooth analysis of the ups and downs of union education by Michael Law, a disturbing critique concerning the gutting of "community" from polytechnic education by Nick Zepke, a jaunty celebration of school-based education by Julie Barbour, an examination of nonformal education and informal learning by Colin Gunn, a depressing account by Findsen and Jennie Harre-Hindmarsh of the attack on university extension and a useful analysis of continuing professional education by Benseman.

"Part 4: Adult Learning Practices" contains five solid chapters. Canadians oppressed by psychologizing in adult education (the dreaded "andragogical consensus") should cash in their frequent flyer points and head south. According to Mills, in Chapter 19, in Aotearoa "there has been a tendency for limited resources to be invested in studies of adult education from an historical, sociological or political rather than a psychological perspective" (p. 286). But, according to Mills, the lack of local psychologically-oriented studies has meant New Zealand adult educators have had to rely on foreign studies concerning the "typical adult learner." Not a good situation because Kiwis aren't Americans. Nor are they Canadians or Australians.

The editors had hoped to get more chapters for "Part 5: Educating Adults and Social Justice," but activists are apt to talk a lot but write little. One suspects that planned contributions didn't arrive on time. However, this is still a strong section. There are three chapters, the first by David James on bicultural and treaty education; the second by pioneering feminist Margot Roth on women's studies and the last by Robert Tobias and Judy Henderson on public issues in Christchurch between 1983 and 1991 (the period of most intense new-right restructuring).

"Part 6: Bringing It Together" consists of one chapter, an "international perspective" in which Stalker describes international forces (globalization, knowledge, culture, economic policies) and attempts to instruct educators about what to do in the face of the New Right. She claims to present a model of "appropriation." Adult educators are told to find "interstices" where social change is possible. But no model is presented. This was a puzzling end to the book. For a country of only three million, New Zealand has a lot of adult education internationalists. What's missing here is analysis of New Zealand social movements and extraordinary internationalists—such as peace, anti-racist and environmental educators/activists (e.g., the crew of *Boy Roel* or the *Rainbow Warrior*, Elsie Locke,

Barry Mitcalfe, Tom Newnham, Rolland O'Regan). Also missing is reference to adult education internationalists like John Condliffe (W.W. I, WAAE and the 1919 Report etc), Arnold Hely (ICAE, UNESCO), Colin Beeby (UNESCO), George Parkyn (UNESCO), Sue Kedgley (U.N. Women's Office), WEA men like Walter Nash, Harry Holland and John Adcock, China experts and educators like Rewi Alley (Baillie work/study schools) Dave Harre (China films like *Second Blade of Grass*), the Champion family (the N.Z. Players, the first professional theatre company) including their film-making daughter Jane (*The Piano, Portrait of a Lady*) and the progressives that ensured New Zealand was the first country to give the vote to women. And what about former P.M. David Lange who used an appearance at the U.N. to educate the entire world about New Zealand's anti-nuclear stance and ignited a process that greatly disturbed the nuclear powers and has virtually eliminated nuclear testing? Or Sir Edmund Hillary who, since Everest, has devoted his life to working with the Nepalese in the areas of education, health and social services? In grasping for "theory" Stalker presents a set of generalized metanarratives that overlook important local particularities, most notably remarkable internationalist Kiwi movements and adult educators.

In general the contributors to this book make no bones about where they stand. Most chapters are informed by a conflict perspective and there are profound misgivings over the excesses of the New Right. This book about adult education and society would be a nice companion to any sociologically oriented foundations or "comparative" course at a university. Anyone in any doubt about the way in which adult education is shaped by the context in which it occurs is advised to read it.

At one time New Zealand adult education was deeply immersed in British literature and traditions but these are barely visible now. In this book there is a noticeable recourse to New Zealand but also Canadian and American reference material. For example, both Freire and Giroux are cited in five chapters. Not many Australian sources are cited. Another noticeable feature is the broad definition given to adult and community education.

This is a comprehensive, scholarly and up-to-date analysis. It's strength is the breadth of the contributions secured, the careful editing, the conceptual grounding, the passion and commitment and the elegance of its presentation. In addition, publisher John Dunmore has done a good job with the layout and printing.

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References

- Law, M. (1996). Rediscovering hope in a new era: Possibilities for the radical tradition of adult education. *Proceedings of the Adult Education Research Conference*. Tampa: University of South Florida, 205-211.
- Paulston, R. (1977). Social and educational change: Conceptual frameworks. *Comparative Education Review*, June/October, 370-395.