

**Samuel Bowles and
Herbert Gintis.
SCHOOLING IN CAPITALIST
AMERICA: EDUCATIONAL
REFORM AND THE
CONTRADICTIONS OF
ECONOMIC LIFE.
New York: Basic Books, 1976.
340 pp. \$13.95.**

For many who are familiar with the development of the interests and ideas of Bowles and Gintis through their individually authored publications, this book represents a keenly anticipated effort to analyse the schooling crisis in the U.S.A.

In skeletal form, the work can be divided into three major parts. The first, the *problem*, is the persistence of social inequalities and the failure of the school to rectify them. The second, the *cause*, is the dominance of the capitalist economic system and the resulting structure and content of schooling. And the third, the *solution*, is the economic transformation (revolution) required in order for the educational system to be egalitarian and liberating. The Marxist mode of analysis will be instantly recognizable, but this should lead neither to an automatic acceptance nor rejection of the authors' arguments.

The authors are entirely convincing in their statement of the problem. The failure of the expansion of the United States' educational system to bring about any reduction in the advantages of the economically and socially privileged — perhaps the most difficult, expensive and significant lesson to be learned from that nation's educational experience throughout the 1960's — has now been amply demonstrated. Bowles and Gintis are less convincing, however, in their interpretation of how the educational system operates, and this, of course, represents the main thrust of their work. It is one thing to argue, as Marx did, that the mode of production shapes all the other dimensions of a society

but, quite another to try to demonstrate a direct causal link from the features and changes in the economic system to the structure and content of the educational system. The result of the tedious effort to transfer the ills of the capitalist economy to the education system is a one-sided, negative, stereotyped view of schooling.

The authors' analysis of the "technocratic-meritocratic" ideology, which undergirds and serves to legitimate the capitalist society, illustrates the nature of their argument and my criticism. In order to refute this doctrine which, when applied to higher education, holds that scholarly attainment and aptitude be the basis of selection for admission, they assemble evidence which seemingly justifies the insinuation that benefits derived from higher education are unrelated to intellectual ability. Thus, they defend open university admissions, completely ignoring the questions raised by variations in applicants' qualifications and capabilities. Overlooked also is the well known evidence in support of selection on intellectual grounds such as that discussed by Dael Wolfe in *The Uses of Talent*. Wolfe concludes that it is important, from a social as well as individual point of view, that the nation's top ten percent in intelligence be educated at least through the college level. However sympathetic we might be with the authors' ends, the cause of truth, pursued in a scholarly manner or in any other way, does not allow acceptance of Bowles and Gintis' conclusions.

Apart from their insistence on the need for a socialist revolution and a vague plea for educators to become revolutionaries, very little effort is made to point the way to resolutions to the contradictions inherent in capitalist society. As Bowles and Gintis state, "We have no firm, strongly held, overall and intellectually coherent answer to the central issue." (p. 282) This comes as a disappointing confession and conclusion. Their promise to provide a book which would be a step in

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the long march toward liberation remains unfulfilled.

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Ludger Beauregard, ed.
**L'AVENIR DE L'HISTOIRE ET DE
LA GEOGRAPHIE.**
Québec: Comité international
d'historiens et de géographes
de langue française, 1976.
132 pp.

Here is a "book" which can be highly recommended on several grounds. The topic is important, the contributors stimulating, the editing excellent, the presentation clear. At the same time it provides the anglophone reader of French with an up-to-date overview of what a fairly wide sample of his/her francophone colleagues in the fields of history and geography are thinking and saying about their subjects.

This little volume is not so much a book as a record of a *colloque* held at Bromont, Québec, in the fall of '74. The gathering was organized by a special sub-committee of the International Committee of French-speaking Historians and Geographers. Thus although the participants were largely from Québec, they also included scholars from Africa, Belgium, France and, improbably, England.

The record of their meetings is divided into four main sections: reviews or minutes of the various sessions; written reflections of the participants of the discussions (What a brilliant idea this! How often does one's best thought occur *after* the formal discussion has finished!); re-

flections on the basic themes of the *colloque* solicited *before* the meeting; and two articles received later.

An odd mixture, it might well be thought. That it succeeds as a book is due equally to the high-level of the contributions and the quality of the editing. Of the four sections, the one with the most immediate appeal is that dealing with individual reactions. It is this section which will particularly attract the anglophone reader of French desiring to make an easy acquaintance with the spontaneous views of his/her French counterparts. Having done this, sheer curiosity and not a little intellectual excitement should spur him/her on to a perusal of the other sections.

It would be invidious even if it were possible in a brief notice to comment on the variety of opinions expressed. Some twenty-four people took part; almost everyone had something of interest to say. Suffice it here to mention the main themes; History, Geography and Education, Research and Society.

One general observation may be permitted: virtually all participants agreed that their disciplines were in a state of crisis; that the crisis stemmed from a number of causes, intellectual and cultural; that the business of education at all levels was made more difficult as a result; and that everyone intended to go on teaching and studying and researching history and geography regardless!

(Copies may be obtained from, Ludger Beauregard, Département de Géographie, Université de Montréal, Montréal.)

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