

Carolyn Gossage.
A QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE —
CANADA'S INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS.
Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1977.
301 pp. \$15.00.

In these days of continuous educational controversy, it is essential that we have an account of the beginnings and growth of independent school education in Canada. What was the effect of this type of schooling on the development of our country? Is there a place for it now or is it just an anachronism — a vestige of elitism in a socialistically oriented society?

A Question of Privilege by Carolyn Gossage is not the definitive history of private schools, but it is a start. The “meat” of the book is divided into three chronological sections with sketches of English Protestant or non-denominational schools founded during these periods. In the prefaces to each section and in her Introduction and Epilogue, Gossage has given a sympathetic and knowledgeable assessment of the philosophies of private education. She was herself educated in an independent school and now teaches at the National Ballet School, where the students get academic as well as dance training. She evidently values what she has experienced. Her case for the independent school is well-stated, and she concludes, “If we have learned anything, it is that no one formula or method or system, structural or open, traditional or progressive, is best for every child. We will not have truly child-centred education until we are able to provide our children with many possibilities, with many kinds of ‘alternative schools’.”

Unfortunately Mrs. Gossage's arguments will probably be read by the already converted — Old Boys and Old Girls and those people who have already decided that an “alternative school” is the answer to their search for education for their children.

Herein lies the pitfall for a book such as this. It is pleasant, anecdotal and, on the whole informative, up to a point. However, it is of necessity just an introduction to the subject. To cover some fifty private institutions adequately in 300 pages (including Appendix, Bibliography and Index) is an impossible task. The documentation at the end of the book is, sadly, already out of date. For example, Strathcona Lodge school closed in 1977. Parents looking for information and comparisons of private schools today must still depend on brochures and school visits. However, this book will give them some background feeling for private education.

A Question of Privilege will be particularly interesting to those who are already familiar with these schools, and they will recognize people and the idiosyncrasies of the various institutions. One fact

emerges forcefully and is highlighted by a quotation from Richard B. Howard, Headmaster of Upper Canada College Preparatory school: "Institutions are born, grow and prosper or wilt and die in relationship to the quality of the human beings who serve them." What an indomitable group those early leaders were! And what different and refreshing approaches to education inspired many of them to set up their own schools!

Now that Gossage has opened the way, perhaps there will be more research into the role and character of the private school. Certainly there should still be a place in our world for choice, and the case for the independent school needs to be heard.

Jean C. Scott
The Study

Alf Chaiton and Neil McDonald (Editors).
CANADIAN SCHOOLS AND CANADIAN IDENTITY.
Toronto: Gage Educational Publishing Ltd., 1977.
189 pp. \$4.65.

Canadian Schools and Canadian Identity is a laudable effort at a difficult but very important task. The task was to deal with a facet of Canadian education from a national perspective rather than an aggregation of regional perspectives. Recognizing this difficulty, the editors chose to use a "unifying theme" by which common factors could be pursued.

This central theme might be defined by the question: what role does the school play in the development of national consciousness in Canada? Naturally, other questions emerge. What role *should* schools play in the development of national consciousness? Do Canadian schools foster nationalism? If so, what sort of nationalism? What is the relationship between national consciousness and civic education?

The book is intended to be open-ended, even though the eleven articles have obviously been carefully planned so as to contribute to thought and understanding relative to the central theme. The editors seem to be aware of the fact that there is no clear-cut, monolithic Canadian identity. The book seems to have been produced in spite of this fact. The conclusion emerges, at least in my inference, that the inculcation of patriotism or some ill-defined nationalism seems to have been the result of our efforts in many jurisdictions — although in certain instances the loyalty developed has been to some "nation" other than Canada, such as Britain or Quebec.

This is primarily a history book, though it attempts, with some success, to deal with a very current issue in Canadian curriculum and