

Book Reviews

Mary Ashworth.
THE FORCES WHICH SHAPED THEM.
Vancouver, B.C.: New Star Books, 1979.
238 pp. \$6.50 paper, \$14.95 cloth.

Writing in 1865, Matthew Macfie expressed a common concern in British Columbia over the mixture of races on the north-west Pacific coast: "It is to be feared that these varieties of humanity do not occupy our soil and multiply their kind, in every instance, without detriment to *that type which we desire should preponderate* . . . Does the presence so largely of *inferior races* forbode the *fatal tainting of the young nation's blood* and signal its premature decay, or will the *vitality of the governing* race triumph over the contamination with which more *primitive types* threaten to impregnate it?" (My italics)

Mary Ashworth's book deals with the history of the education of the Canadian-born children of the groups who received the harshest treatment in British Columbia: the Native Indians, the Chinese, the Japanese, the Doukhobors, and the East Indians. In her conclusion, she states that "Canada has no national policy regarding the education of its children, it has set no minimal standards, it has devised no national programs by which inequalities might be lessened if not eradicated. Canada has no national policy regarding the language rights of children who enter school speaking neither English nor French, not even for its first citizens, the native children."

It is quite clear from this work that Canada's so-called Mosaic was a myth, and that, like the U.S.A., Canada had an assimilative policy towards its immigrants. But, unlike the policy of the U.S.A., some of those groups that were regarded as "inferior races" and "primitive types" had been brought to Canada in general and British Columbia in particular merely to carry out menial, hard, and dangerous jobs, following the completion of which they were expected to return to their native lands, or alternatively, to remain in Canada but unmarried

and without progeny. The story of those who did remain here and have produced children is the pathetic subject of Ashworth's study.

While the book has been well researched and incorporates an extensive list of references, it is highly readable, and even suspenseful. Though the narrative is free of partisanship and invectives, the net effect of the calmly presented data is disturbing and engages the emotions. At times one wonders whether the policies and practices described, such as the forceful removal of Doukhobor children from their parents, the mass deportations of the Japanese, and the cultural genocide of the Indians, apply to Hitler's Germany and Stalin's USSR rather than to the free and democratic country Canada is supposed to be.

For those who wish to understand the wounds, the needs, the aspirations, and the potential contributions of the nearly one-third of the Canadian people who do not belong to the dominant majority, this book is a must. It is also a must for those who want to understand the history of Canada, especially its social history. And, of course, it is a must for anyone interested in education, scholars, teachers, administrators, or laymen. Contrary to Macfie's views of 1865, shared by many of his contemporaries, the "strangers in our midst" were not "inferior races" and "primitive types." Some of their views and values are only now and only gradually being understood, and their relevance for today is becoming more and more obvious to those who have sensitivity and hold a global perspective.

It might be appropriate to conclude this brief review by quoting a Doukhobor lawyer, who, in 1953, outlined what he believed should be the system of education that would meet the requirements of the Doukhobors, goals of education to which increasing numbers of Canadians are beginning to subscribe today, and, I believe, will subscribe in the future:

It must be an education which will seek to develop human nature in its widest scope. It should be alive to the most vital life problems. It should be an education which is primarily concerned with man himself, not only material things; education must be a leading force in establishing a new and saner social order; it should lead us to a better understanding of our position in the Universe, our relation to Cosmic Laws, to the whole human society, to the fuller understanding of ourselves. In short, an education that will be a succor in the realization of man's nobler dreams.

In a certain sense, Mary Ashworth's book is a challenge to Canada to incorporate into its social and multicultural pattern all the beautiful and worthwhile aspects of the many heritages we have found here or have brought along with us when we settled in this great land.

Dan Dorotich
University of Saskatchewan