

history. Its continued existence remained tenuous even in the best of times. On several occasions it looked as though Dana would not make it. Petersen has recorded this precarious story with careful attention to the forces that alternately spelled hope or pessimism. Truly it could be said of Dana, as it once was said of a similar college, that it was "the offspring of horny, handed labor, begotten of faith, reared in love and hope." Not until 1958 did Dana achieve full accreditation, and not until 1960 did it enroll five hundred students in a single year. Then with the rapidly rising costs at private colleges, the failure of Nebraska to authorize tuition grants, and the inability of Iowa students (traditionally a major part of the student body) to bring their tuition grants into Nebraska, Dana began to suffer enrollment declines in the late 1970s. Petersen's account ends in 1984 just before Dana experienced once again a major and almost catastrophic institutional crisis. As so often before, the little school determined to stay alive. It would now appear that Dana's chances of surviving with honor are at least as good as they were in the days of when the college was so hopefully founded.

A Place Called Dana is an exciting story of one college's struggle to keep faith with its founders' aim to promote quality education in a context of high ideals. The book is a model college history of its type. It should, however, be of interest to a far wider audience than Dana alumni or readers interested in church college history. It is, all in all, a very good introduction to one immigrant group's experience of finding its way on the American social scene. As such this book can be enthusiastically recommended to any reader interested in immigrant history. It represents social and institutional history successfully joined together and thereby provides one more chapter in the diversified account of American culture.

LUTHER COLLEGE

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Public Schools in Hard Times: The Great Depression and Recent Years, by David Tyack, Robert Lowe, and Elisabeth Hansot. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984. viii, 267 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$20.00 cloth.

For almost a half century an interpretation set forth by Ellwood P. Cubberley in his influential textbook, *Public Education in the United States* (1919), dominated the historiography of American education. Cubberley, longtime dean of the Stanford University School of Education, celebrated the growth of public schools and their success in enhancing individual opportunity and thus advancing democracy in the United States. This interpretation fulfilled its author's instrumental

purpose by inspiring several generations of teachers with proper professional zeal for perpetuating public schools.

Then in the 1960s revisionist historians, reflecting in part new historiographical trends as well as the ideological ferment of the new left, challenged several points of Cubberley's interpretation. These historians paid attention to the previously neglected social and intellectual context of public education, emphasized that educators were often more interested in fostering social control than in enhancing personal opportunity, and asserted that schools, far from being unmitigated successes, often failed in significant ways. Harvard-educated David Tyack, currently professor of education and history at Stanford, contributed to the new revisionism with several key articles and books. His latest work, coauthored with graduate student Robert Lowe and political scientist Elisabeth Hansot, presents a revisionist interpretation of public education in the 1930s. Based exclusively on published sources, *Public Schools in Hard Times* is enhanced by the imaginative use of photographs, cartoons, and tables to support its argument that public schools are deeply embedded in society and reflect the attitudes held by dominant political elites. Therefore educators have been generally conservative, and schools have failed to foster equality of opportunity because teachers have been blind to the impediments of class, race, and gender.

The book opens with a discussion of the depression and its impact on the political economy of public education. The authors properly caution readers to be aware of the diversity of responses during the depression, depending on whether communities were rural or urban, black or white, working or upper class. Nonetheless, the authors find a coherent pattern in the variety of local experience: although the depression was a potentially radicalizing experience capable of producing a watershed in American educational history, it did not alter public schools significantly, despite the appearance of socialist rhetoric about failed capitalism and George Counts's social reconstructionism. A conservative educational establishment that had traditionally sought businessmen as allies, had been timid about social justice, and had portrayed schools as a sacred domain above politics, combined with a conservative counterattack by businessmen on radicalism in the schools, insured that neither social reconstructionism nor a New Deal in education would be the road taken.

In part because they were ideologically blind to the class and race bias of public schools, conservative educators could not agree on a program of federal aid with liberal New Dealers committed to enhancing equality of opportunity. Consequently, the Roosevelt New Deal bypassed the educational establishment to create alternative educational agencies—the NYA, WPA, and CCC—committed to helping the underprivileged. Similarly, unconscious class and race bias explains

why progressive pedagogy—much discussed in the depression decade—had little effect on the internal workings of schools as educators protected the traditional curriculum of college preparatory subjects and the teacher-centered methods of drill and recitation. Apparently gender was not a factor hindering federal aid or progressive pedagogy. This may be the case, but in general the topic of gender as an obstacle to equal opportunity is less well developed by the authors than are the factors of class and race.

In the face of depression-induced cuts in local school funding and the absence of any program of federal aid, supposedly apolitical school leaders defended themselves politically by mobilizing to win greater financial support from state legislatures, where they had been an influential interest group for many years. Educators employed the familiar methods of publicity and exhortation to present their traditional argument that schools were essential to the common good. Meanwhile at the local level, urban educators—rhetorically committed to but actually ambivalent about local control—protected themselves by employing corporate models of school governance that placed decision making in the hands of professionally trained superintendents rather than local citizens.

The last chapter, "Schools Then and Now," implies that "presentist" concerns about the relevance of history for educational policy making continue to drive the work of revisionist educational history just as they did the older Cubberley tradition. The authors maintain that in the 1980s, as in the 1930s, educators face scarcity along with the persisting problem of educational inequality that pedagogues of the earlier decade failed to solve. But the scarcity of the present—dollars, students, public confidence, and professional morale—is much more serious than the shortage of the past, which involved only dollars. On this sour note the book abruptly ends.

Despite its abrupt ending, which leaves the reader somewhat puzzled about the purpose of the last chapter, this informative book is useful to historians of Iowa and the upper Midwest because it suggests a number of topics for research: What impact did the depression have on the schools of predominantly rural states? Did educators of rural states have a similar ambivalence to local control and rely on the same corporate bureaucratic model as urban educators? Did class, race, and gender limit educational opportunity in rural states? Research focused on these questions at the local and state level is needed to test the validity of the interesting, suggestive, and perhaps fruitful, revisionist interpretation presented by *Public Schools in Hard Times*.

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