Essay Review

The Canadian Curriculum: A Response to Barrow

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There is virtually no debate on the Canadian context of curriculum. Curriculum theory is dominated by American and British names. One constantly sees on course lists and bibliographies such names as Tyler, Beauchamp, Saylor and Alexander, Walker, Stenhouse, and the rest. Occasionally, some exotic flavouring is added by the inclusion of a Michael Young or a Pierre Bourdieu. And, of course, phenomenology has become the latest fashion, while even the occasional Marxist is allowed to say a few words. But there is rarely any Canadian dimension to this.[1] The prevailing assumption seems to be that one simply needs to take some foreign approach, usually American or British, and apply it to the Canadian scene, making at best some minor modifications so that it will blend better with the local scenery. Thus, for example, the Harvard Social Studies Project is transmogrified into the Canadian Public Issues Project (Bourne & Eisenberg, 1978). Thus also, the various science projects of the late sixties were imported en masse from the United States. One can fairly easily prove, should proof be necessary, that Canadian educationists' points of reference lie south of the border. The National Council of Social Studies and *Social Education* are more prestigious than the Canadian Association for the Social Studies and *The History and Social Science Teacher*. The American Educational Research Association and its meetings have far more attraction for Canadian researchers than do its much weaker Canadian counterparts. Harold Innis used to warn economists that there was a uniquely Canadian dimension to their discipline, and more recently similar warnings have been uttered about such disciplines as political science and sociology. Indeed, the Symons Report is full of examples. Presumably the same is true of education, where there ought to be a particularly pressing need to attend to the uniquely Canadian setting of the educational enterprise. Only recently, for example, the Science Council of Canada released a discussion paper drawing attention to the Canadian themes to be found in the "objective"

discipline of science, stressing the importance of seeing science education in a Canadian context (Page, 1979).

None of this should be taken as the advocacy of educational chauvinism, a policy of "curriculum in one country" as it were. Canadian educationists can and must learn from others' experience. There is, however, a conspicuous lack of attention being paid to the meaning of curriculum theory in a Canadian context. As Robin Barrow notes in *The Canadian Curriculum: A Personal View*, "there is not yet a very clear or long standing tradition of educational theory in Canada" (pp. 20–1). His essay is intended as a contribution to the development of such a theory and it would be a shame if it were to pass largely unnoticed or dismissed as lightweight, as seems to have been the case to date. This paper is an attempt to continue the debate that Barrow has begun. It is more a series of reflections upon Barrow's argument, perhaps, than a response to it in the narrow sense. It is written in the conviction that it is long past time to root educational theory, and, more narrowly, curriculum theory, in its Canadian context.

At present the very nature of Canada, even its existence, is a subject of public debate (Simeon, 1977; Bell & Tepperman, 1979). The Western provinces want a better deal and offer no apologies for saying so. Ontario is fearful that it may be losing its place in the sun. Quebec wants at the very least some kind of special status, be it a revised federation, sovereignty association or outright independence. The Maritime provinces feel increasingly cut off from the rest of Canada, while Newfoundland happily contemplates its future oil wealth. One leading political commentator recently commented that "in five or ten years the provinces still interested in the economics of Confederation could be down to just Manitoba and the Maritimes" (Gwyn, 1980). At the same time, the constitutional debate raises fundamental questions concerning the nature of the Canadian state and political community.

And yet, incredible as it seems, none of this has made any dent upon Canadian curriculum theorists. They go on perusing their manuscripts while their house burns down to the ground around them. In April 1980, for example, a symposium was held at L'Université Laval on the theme of *Étude du Curriculum: Conceptions et Approches*. It was jointly sponsored by Laval's Département de Mesure et Evaluation and its Département de Didactique, by the U.B.C. Centre for the Study of Curriculum and Instruction, and by the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies. Despite the involvement of such impressive members the symposium spent its entire two days discussing the mechanics of curriculum organization, implementation, and evaluation. The substantive questions concerning the purpose of curriculum in Canada were never raised. The interestingly entitled session, "Les Influences Internes sur le Développement du Curriculum," for example, contained three papers: on the

implications of declining enrolment for curriculum; on the evaluation of schools; and on materials. Unfortunately, there was nothing on the overall political context within which curriculum exists.

All this is by way of prologue to Barrow's intriguing title, *The Canadian Curriculum* – not "Curriculum Development," or "Curriculum Evaluation," or even "The Curriculum in a Canadian Context," but *The Canadian Curriculum*. Unfortunately, however, Barrow promises more than he delivers. There is not really all that much that is Canadian about his proposals. He himself recognizes this and presents an argument for seeing curriculum, in some important aspects, as supra-national. He argues, for example, that a curriculum policy for Canada need not be all that different from that of other developed countries: "I shall begin the task of thinking things through assuming the context of any Western industrialized state. The sorts of educational issues and arguments I am concerned with, though entirely pertinent to Canada, do not presuppose any intimate knowledge of, say, the school situation in British Columbia" (p. 20). True enough, but Barrow gives us a very loaded example. One need not know very much about the school system of British Columbia, but one needs to know a great deal about Canada, its history and present status, its concerns and problems, which are a very different matter. Parenthetically, one might note that one reason why many Canadian curriculum theorists have nothing to say about the direction of curricula in Canada is that they themselves do not know enough about the country. Their training and education have been in the field of curriculum rather than of history, the humanities, or the social sciences. Which is, perhaps, why someone like Northrop Frye has more interesting things to say about education than do many educationists.

Even if one accepts Barrow's thesis that a curriculum theory derived from "the context of any western industrialized state" can be usefully applied to Canada, he still omits a great deal. As will be argued later, his curriculum seems to occur in a social and cultural vacuum, perhaps inevitably given his emphasis on and penchant for conceptual analysis, and for "thinking things through," to use one of his favourite phrases. Philosophy of this type always runs the risk of rising above and therefore ignoring the real world created by historical forces.

The only substantial concession Barrow makes to the Canadian reality is to make both English and French part of his compulsory curriculum: " ... both populations should acquire facility in the language of the other, partly as a mark of mutual respect, partly to provide access to the culture of either community, and partly to facilitate communication on a political and everyday level" (p. 66). One's first reaction is that this reveals an extraordinary faith in the ability of the schools to teach English and French. Unless everyone attends immersion programs, or unless teaching methods become very much more effective than they now are, it is

unlikely that the compulsory teaching of French and English will lead even to functional bilingualism.

Barrow says nothing about the political difficulties of making French and English compulsory to the point of producing effectively bilingual students. In this regard, his recommendations are utopianism pure and simple. Further, he says nothing about what is to happen when students fail, as some surely must. Do they repeat and repeat their year until they pass, since bilingualism is so important? Do they graduate with an inferior qualification or diploma? Do they become, somewhat in the style of the French revolutionaries of 1791, passive rather than active citizens? Such questions Barrow seems to ignore or to regard as secondary at best. His argument is that once we are clear *why* we want to do something, how to do it is a merely technical matter.

Unfortunately, the world is not so simple. It is too easy to say that the "why" question "must precede and is ultimately more crucial than the 'how' question on which we spend so much time" (p. 14). But the "how" and the "why" questions cannot be so easily separated in the daily world of curriculum committees, schools, ministries of education, or, indeed, anywhere else except the philosopher's study. They are inextricably connected, practically and even conceptually. To indulge in the "why" without ever considering the "how," or considering it as of only secondary importance, is surely misguided. The "why" may be *primus*, but only *inter pares*. It is not so much a matter of first the "why" then the "how," but rather of treating them together. Further, it is not that we are spending too much time on the "how" question, but rather that we are not spending our time very well. The research literature on curriculum implementation is guaranteed to send anyone who reads it into deep, if not clinical, depression (Fullan & Pomfret, 1977).

Barrow not only ignores the practicalities of his recommendation, he is naive in what he assumes bilingualism will accomplish. Even assuming that the schools could teach children to be bilingual, there is no reason to presume that this will create greater rapport between English and French Canadians. There are, after all, plenty of *indépendantistes* in Quebec who are admirably fluent in both French and English, but their bilingualism has not led them to embrace the cause of a united Canada. Obviously the study of English and French will not hinder "communication on a political or an everyday level," but neither will it necessarily facilitate it all that much. The British armed services used to train selected servicemen in Russian, and even Chinese, but the aim was certainly not to facilitate communication.

Far more is involved in communication than simply learning a language. A different mind set, a different *mentalité* is at issue (Steiner, 1975). The problems of translation illustrate this perfectly: *traduire est trahir* – to translate is to betray. The problems are not insuperable but

they are a good deal more complicated than is suggested by Barrow's blithe recommendation that children should all learn French and English.

However, perhaps we should be grateful even for this, since it is more than some Canadian educationists are prepared to allow. There remain many school systems in anglophone Canada where French remains an optional course and is still described as a "foreign" language. In some jurisdictions, French is an alternative to Canadian Studies – an irony that needs no comment.

Beyond language, there are many other Canadian concerns which Barrow ignores in his recommendations. One looks in vain, for instance, for anything about the implications of the influence on American cultural institutions and mass media. The Canada Studies Foundation long ago identified as a major concern Canada's exposure to strong external influences. One can still find in elementary schools worksheets that speak to Canadian children about "our president" and "our capital," meaning Washington, D.C. In April, 1980, a group of Grade XI students in Winnipeg organized a formal protest to the Manitoba Minister of Education against having to write American tests of skills. And so on and so on.

Barrow is right in saying that education must in part be socialization, but he totally ignores the question of whether Canadian youngsters are being socialized into American ways of living and looking at the world. It is certainly the case, for example, that Canada's media view the world largely through American eyes, if only because so much of their international news is filtered through American sources. In 1970 the Davey Committee on the Mass Media reported that " ... what is at stake is not only the vigour of our democracy. It also involves the survival of our nationhood. A nation is a collection of people who share common images of themselves ... it is the media – together with education and the arts – that can make it grow (Davey, 1970, Vol. I, p. 11; Elkin, 1972). This report went on to note that "Canada has one decade remaining in which its members have to make up their minds whether they want to remain a distinct political, cultural and geographical national entity" (p. 12). Ten years later we are still here, but the question remains. Indeed, developments in communications technology have made it even more urgent. However, Barrow says nothing about these and other vital concerns.

He includes in his compulsory curriculum something called "social study," which he describes as the "study of anything pertaining to the society in question, in practical terms the most significant elements or features of that society" (p. 66). It is possible, even probable, therefore, that the issue of United States' cultural dominance would be part of this social study. The problem is that Barrow is simply not specific enough. What, one wonders, does he see as the "most significant" features of Canadian society? It is not asking too much that an essay entitled *The Canadian Curriculum* should say something about this. As it is, Barrow

speaks of "information about customs, education, the distribution of wealth, treatment of the elderly, delinquency, the police and religion" (p. 66). The selection is puzzling. Are the items intended to be illustrative or exhaustive? If the former, where is the "for instance" or the "such as"? If the latter, what were the criteria for selecting these particular topics? Barrow needs to be more specific on this issue of which significant features of Canadian society must be taught. It is not an impossible task. Some years ago, for example, the Canada Studies Foundation proposed a fairly short list of "continuing Canadian concerns," which it described as:

1 Canada, a bilingual country, is culturally diverse with two founding cultures, native populations, and peoples from a great variety of origins.
2 The people of Canada have viewpoints substantially influenced by regional factors and characteristics.
3 Canada is exposed to strong external influences.
4 Canada is vast, and has a unique northern location.
5 Canada is an industrialized, technological, and urbanized society.
6 Canada is a democratic, federally organized, political community.

Whatever its limitations, such a list is specific enough to be helpful.[2] It is certainly more informative than Barrow's vague formulation. No one could disagree, for instance, with his argument that students must be informed about the most significant features of their own society. Who would ever suggest the contrary? Controversy comes when one begins to specify such features, and unless one does this, the discussion must inevitably remain trite.

To specify just what it means to study Canada is also to cast doubt upon Barrow's assumption that teaching youngsters about their own society is somehow antiseptic and uncontroversial. He argues strongly that in "social study" the priority is not to train students to be amateur social scientists but simply to give them necessary knowledge. "The stress falls on providing information about society, not on going through the embryonic motions of being a sociologist, being initiated into a religion, theorizing about causes or moralizing about consequences ... . The object is that future generations shall be a great deal better informed about their society than most of us are" (p. 66). Such sentiments are admirable and unexceptionable, but fraught with difficulties that Barrow ignores. As with his recommendation that everyone must study English and French, he ignores a host of political realities. He seems to assume that the information which he insists that students must learn (not should, but must) is somehow neutral, safe, objective. In many cases, however, it clearly is not.

Contrary to Barrow's argument, information is not neutral, even when it is objective. One of his examples is the distribution of wealth. Given his emphasis on the primacy of supplying students with information, what is

the point? He tells us that "such information is a necessary prerequisite of rational-democratic behaviour" (p. 66). Granted, but it is surely not enough. It is necessary but not sufficient. Is the current distribution of wealth desirable or not, and by whose standards and by what criteria? If it is undesirable, either because it is too egalitarian or it is not egalitarian enough, what should and can be done to change it? Such questions simply cannot be avoided, no matter how much one may wish to emphasize "information." Indeed, given Barrow's advocacy of a "rational-democratic" society, it is inconceivable that Barrow would wish to avoid them. However, he explicitly says that he wishes students to avoid "theorizing about causes or moralizing about consequences" (p. 66). The words have a rather pejorative ring. If one were to say something like "discussing the pro's and con's and examining the issues involved," it might sound better though somewhat grey. And, of course, beyond all this is the more fundamental question: Who decides that the distribution of wealth, or any other topic, is a significant feature of society in the first place? In short, there are two problems that Barrow does not tackle: one, by what criteria and by whom are the significant features of contemporary society selected; two, what is the point of simply giving students information about them – what are they supposed to do with it?

Barrow's easy, not to say scornful, dismissal of the sociology of knowledge does not get rid of the problem. The school curriculum does represent a world view which is in the interests of some groups rather than of others. This is not at all the same thing as arguing for the relativity of all knowledge. The knowledge is there, but although it may be objective, it is not necessarily neutral (Blackburn, 1972; Osborne, 1979). As Barrow's former colleague, Brian Simon, has expressed it, the school system, including the curriculum, is "an area of class struggle where opposing objectives meet." Simon goes on to elaborate: "For instance, the organized labour movement, expressing the interests of the working class, sees education ... as one means, if auxiliary, of economic and political emancipation; while the bourgeoisie see it now and have seen it in the past primarily as a means of social control" (Simon, 1976, p., 169).

There is more to be said about Barrow's specific recommendations concerning the content of the curriculum. He proposes a three-fold division:

Grades 1–7: literary, numeracy, computer competency, physical health and "exploring" the world around the child.
Grade 8: natural sciences, mathematics, and fine arts.
Grades 9–12: English, French, history, and social study.

This compulsory curriculum is to be taught for approximately half of each day, with the rest of the time being the child's own, to do whatever he or she likes. In addition, Barrow urges the unashamed use of the hidden

curriculum as the medium of moral upbringing, in order to foster "tolerance, impartiality, concern for the well-being of others, respect for persons" (p. 64). This is not especially controversial. Barrow is certainly right in saying that one cannot teach without creating and resorting to a hidden curriculum. In other words, teaching is more than just instruction. Essentially, Barrow is restoring Plato's notion that the so-called hidden curriculum should be planned to exemplify and be consistent with the qualities we wish to see developed in children.

This curriculum is intended to serve two purposes: "to produce a thriving community of autonomous and democratic citizens" (p. 56), and, following R. S. Peters, to undertake "the initiation into culture and knowledge and the provision of understanding of 'the reason why of things'" (p. 68). Given these two goals there are some strange gaps in Barrow's recommendations. The most noticeable omission lies in the whole area of the natural sciences, which are studied in grade eight and then, so far as the compulsory subjects are concerned, forgotten. It is difficult to see, however, how anyone can be autonomous in today's society without more knowledge and understanding of science than this. It is obvious that many of our present problems arise from our use of science and technology and that we will have to turn to science and technology for their solution. Unless we are content to be always mystified by the experts, it is imperative that ordinary citizens grasp the concerns of the experts. It is extremely doubtful, however, whether this can be accomplished solely by the study of science in grade eight, no matter how much time is devoted to it. There is considerable evidence that many children in grade eight have difficulty in grasping science and in conceptualizing its principles (Williams et al., 1979). To teach it once, and once only, therefore, is unlikely to be successful.

In addition, given Barrow's acceptance of Peters' notion of education as initiation, and his approving quotation of Arnold's dictum that we should be concerned with the best that has been thought and said, it is odd that he has neglected science as something worthy of consideration. It is as though Huxley and Spencer never lived. Neither Phenix's nor Hirst's well-known classifications of knowledge appear in Barrow's argument. Large areas of the human experience are simply ignored, apparently because they are not essential for the training of autonomous and democratic citizens. I presume that the use of the word "citizen" is deliberate. Barrow does not talk about autonomous and democratic *people*, nor does he talk in an abstract fashion of "personal autonomy based on reason" to use Dearden's phrase (Dearden, 1968). Rather, he speaks of citizens.

Obviously, he is right, in the sense that people do not live in a vacuum. they live together in a society and if citizenship means knowing how to live together, to interact with other people, then there are no serious difficulties. But one wonders if something else is involved. Early in the

essay, for example, the word "happy" is included in the list of desirable qualities, "... ideally we would like to see a thriving community of happy, autonomous and democratic citizens" (p. 22). It never appears again and one wonders whether this is accidental. It might explain Barrow's lack of emphasis upon such things as art, music, aesthetics, physical education (beyond grade eight), for since they are conducive to happiness they might well be considered luxuries if the priority is to train citizens, no matter how autonomous. Even this last point seems rather tenuous, however. Pico Della Mirandola argued that what makes humanity unique is its ability to choose. A rock must be a rock, a dog must be a dog, but men and women can choose to live like rocks, dogs, or angels. It would seem, therefore, that the more one knows about the human experience, the greater one's range of choice. As Isaiah Berlin has put it:

> Unless men are given the chance to find out what kind of world they live in, what they have made, are making and could make of it – and this can only be done if they have some notion of what other men are thinking, and feeling and doing, and how and why – they will continue to walk in darkness and be faced by the unpredicted and appalling consequences of one another's ambitions (Berlin, 1971, p. 10).

To achieve this, Barrow's proposed curriculum seems unnecessarily limited. He spends a good deal of time defending its compulsory aspect, but he is essentially fighting with shadows.The real problem is that he does not make it compulsory enough.

Indeed, the notion of a "thriving community of autonomous and democratic citizens" raises issues which Barrow does not discuss. The formulation too easily assumes an automatic correspondence between the individual and society. One is reminded of the liberal notion of the invisible hand: if we all pursue our own self-interest, the result will be the greatest good of the greatest number. But which is ultimately more valuable – the thriving community or the autonomous, democratic citizen? And what does "thriving" mean in this context – materially prosperous, philosophically enlightened, physically secure, emotionally stable? Obviously, to live in a society means accepting, willingly or otherwise, limitations upon one's autonomy. This is Durkheim's notion of education as a vehicle of social integration and control, of course, and Barrow is too good a philosopher to have missed the point. Presumably, it is a matter of being able to say only so much in the space at his disposal, but one can hardly discuss curriculum, Canadian or otherwise, without coming to grips with the issue. One would welcome fewer pages devoted to bashing Hall-Dennis and given over instead to such questions.[3]

There are indications here and there, however, that, despite the goals of autonomy and democracy, Barrow takes a fairly conservative view of citizenship. He observes, for example, that "any state must seek to bring up citizens who will not find the terms of life within it too irksome or too

alien" (p. 69). It is not clear whether Barrow is here stating a fact, formulating a goal or simply resigning himself to the inevitable. Is it not also the task of the good citizen to try to change those terms of life which are too irksome or too alien? Is there not a tension between autonomy and membership in a society which, in this essay at least, Barrow does not resolve? It may be that an autonomous citizen, at least in the second half of the twentieth century, is a contradiction in terms.

This tension can be seen in Barrow's failure to discuss the problems inherent in his specification of the attributes of a democratic individual.

> The democratic man is one who believes in the value of equal happiness for all and such material equality as that may necessitate. The value of freedom up to the point where it militates against the well-being of others, the value of absolute freedom of expression, the value of impartiality, and the value of such procedural values as may best serve these other values: as to attitudes, he is tolerant of diversity, fond of his freedom, responsible with it too, and prepared to cope with change (p. 56).

Each one of these qualities, at least as stated here, begs some questions. To review the most obvious problems briefly: what is meant by equal happiness for all? Is it a quantitative measure taking us back to Bentham's felicific calculus? Is pushpin really as good as poetry? Elsewhere Barrow says not, for he notes that education is "by definition concerned with the worthwhile and with quality" (p. 61). As to the amount of material equality that the achievement of equal happiness may necessitate, who can ever decide this? Obviously, people should not be allowed to die from neglect but, once some minimal provision for welfare has been established, who decides what is reasonable? Similarly with the commitment to freedom up to the point where it militates against others' well-being, who decides where this point is, and by what criteria? It is a good, liberal statement but it is also a highly contentious issue, as Barrow knows very well (Rawls, 1971; Nozick, 1974). The "value of impartiality" raises similar problems. The word implies a distance from partisan viewpoints, a balance between opposing positions. One is reminded of Winston Churchill's response to the accusation that he had taken sides in his reaction to the British General Strike of 1926. He is supposed to have said that between the fire and the fire-brigade he could not be impartial. If Barrow had said the "value of objectivity" the problem would disappear, but he did not. And yet there are many problems in the world about which one cannot, indeed should not, be impartial although one can certainly be objective. To return to an earlier point, Barrow's assumption that the important thing is to be well-informed is not enough. The crucial question is the action that one takes upon the basis of the information, but this he ignores.

In view of Barrow's concern for tolerance and autonomy, it is surprising that his compulsory curriculum does not contain some non-academic components. For example, autonomy depends in part

upon the ability to earn one's living, to have a trade to turn to, but Barrow's curriculum says nothing about this. One could make a good case for compelling all students (not just those in vocational programs) to learn the rudiments of at least one trade. It might serve to reduce class division, snobbery, and cultural differentation. At the same time, as Newmann and others have suggested, students might be expected (i.e. compelled) to engage in some kind of community action (Newmann, 1975; Conrad & Hedin, 1977). Similarly, the curriculum can be organized to help bridge the gap between young and old, between classes and cultures, between the school and its community, as argued for example by Coleman (Coleman, 1974). On all of this, however, Barrow is silent.

This brings us back to a point made earlier in this paper: Barrow has unduly neglected the social and political dimension of education. He says at one point, "One thing the radicals are right about is that education and politics are linked" (p. 55). He nowhere pursues the implications of this remark, however. Historians and sociologists have shown us that schools do not simply educate and socialize. Rather, they serve as a means of social control. The notion of social control is, of course, notoriously slippery. It can mean everything or nothing. Often it is interpreted in a loose, functionalist sense in which something called "society" organizes the conditions of its own reproduction. Society, however, is a reification, a convenient fiction. It, in fact, consists of various groups co-existing and competing with each other and education is part of this process. Michael Katz, for example, has written that "the popular acceptance of public education represented ideological hegemony: the unselfconscious and willing acceptance of a direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group" (Katz, 1976, p. 400). It is increasingly trendy nowadays to refer to "hegemony," but it does nevertheless represent something real. It has been well described as "an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestation, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotations" (Williams, 1960, p. 587). This whole issue, however, is ignored in Barrow's world of self-acting, autonomous, and democratic individuals who somehow work together to form a thriving community.

Indeed, this provides a clue as to what is wrong with Barrow's description of the state of educational theory. He identifies only two schools, which he calls progressive and radical. The progressives, he argues, are concerned more with methods than with goals, with the child than with society. Radicals, on the other hand, see the connections between school and society, and concern themselves with goals as much as with means: "the radical is almost always concerned with changes in aims as well as means, whereas the progressive tends to be methodologically orientated" (p. 24).

This division between progressive and radical is puzzling. It is obviously only a partial *tour d'horizon* and it is not clear how it helps Barrow's argument. It omits at least two other schools of thought: first, the conservatives, or whatever one chooses to call them, as representd by Daly's criticism of the Hall-Dennis Report or by Hilda Neatby's *So Little For The Mind* (both reminding us that the conservative tradition has strong roots in Canadian education); second, what one can only call the socialist school, as represented by Bowles and Gintis in the United States or by *This Magazine* in Canada. Barrow is surely wrong to include George Martell's collection of pieces, *The Politics of the Canadian Public School*, in what he calls the radical tradition. It represents an approach which is quite different from the work of Goodman, Illich, Reimer et al., whom Barrow describes as radicals.

In any case, Barrow's distinction between radicals and progressives is not nearly as clear cut as he wishes it to appear. He puts Goodman, Illich, Reimer, along with Postman and Weingartner (*Teaching as a Subversive Activity*) in the radical camp. Dewey, Montessori, and Holt go into the progressive group, with A. S. Neill flitting somewhere in between. But closer inspection suggests that both groups really belong as one, which, for sake of a better term, might best be called "liberal." Political labels are, of course, always difficult to pin down, but the words conservative, liberal, and socialist have at least the advantage of long usage and familiarity. Barrow's terms, progressive and radical, are much more slippery and unstable.

The real problem, however, is that there is no fundamental difference between them. It is difficult to see that Illich or Postman (radicals) are any more concerned with goals (as opposed to method) or with society (as opposed to children) than Holt or Dewey. Indeed, one would have thought that *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, which Barrow sees as a radical book, fits perfectly into his definition of progressivism as primarily concerned with method, and it is grossly unfair to suggest that Dewey was concerned neither with society nor with educational goals.

It is even more puzzling to find Barrow's radicals accepting the notion of innate human nature and of education for immediate vocational ends. Both ideas are fundamentally conservative. By this standard, Jensen would be a radical with his views concerning innate racial differences in intelligence; so would Bantock with his advocacy of differentiated curricula for those of a theoretical and of a practical turn of mind. The problem is that Barrow has failed to discuss what one might call the "real radicals" (to invent yet another label), to use his definition of radicalism as favouring root and branch change. These are surely best represented by those educational theorists and critics writing within the socialist tradition, be they Marxist, neo-Marxist, *Marxisant*, or some other variety (Martell, 1974; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Dale *et al.* 1976; Ollman, 1979; Shor, 1980). It is no coincidence that one of this group wrote an early and convincing criticism of Illich (Gintis, 1972). And it is certainly no

coincidence that this group, more successfully than any other, has located schooling fairly and squarely within its social context.

In this connection, it is worth noting Barrow's contention, early in his essay, that there is an "alarming discrepancy" in education between our intentions and our deeds. He is certainly right about the discrepancy, but he goes on to argue that it "very often" occurs "because we do not really understand what is involved in (our) ends and aims" (p. 13). To quote him again, "Our practice is impeded by the fact that we run away from the task of properly thinking things through" (p. 14). If only it were this simple! One is reminded of Silberman's complaint in *Crisis in the Classroom* of the "mindlessness" of schools. Here the "socialist" school also has something to offer. It argues that schools are far from mindless, that there are very good reasons for their doing the things they do. When schools emphasize obedience, conformity, drudgery, and so on, it is not because teachers are not sufficiently good philosophers, but because schools are intended to produce certain kinds of people. Thus, the Ten Nation Civic Education Survey, having noted the failure of civic education to achieve its goals, concludes, "Perhaps a hierarchical organization such as the school is not the right setting for inculcating democratic values" (Torney et al., 1975, p. 21).

Barrow apparently would deny this. He sees no contradiction between using any and all teaching methods and the development of autonomous, democratic citizens. He notes that "there is a view to the effect that if one wants autonomous and democratic adults one must give autonomy and democracy to children" (p. 68). This he rejects and he may well be right, but much depends upon what is meant by giving autonomy and democracy to children. Only a few romantics advocate giving children total freedom. In any event, the question of whether or not children can learn to be autonomous and democratic with or without being given autonomy and democracy (whatever this means) is an empirical rather than a conceptual one. And there is some empirical evidence that bears upon the question.

Barrow is correct to attack the fetish for apparent empiricism. It is difficult to quarrel with his statement that "[W]e certainly need to know about and take account of the findings of empirical research. But we also need to be a great deal more careful about accepting and putting our full trust in such findings than some educationalists have been" (p.18). Nonetheless, empirical research is conspicously absent from *The Canadian Curriculum.* There is, for example, enough literature on the impact of the hidden curriculum to make one wonder whether Barrow's espousal of any teaching method, so long as it is effective, might not be self-defeating.

In recent years, for example, political scientists have paid a good deal of attention to political socialization. One of their findings is that one cannot confine political learning (and Barrow's autonomy and democracy are surely this) to the formal curriculum. Rather, it occurs as the result of all

the experiences that children have in school and, consequently, begins at a very early age. The anthropologist, Lawrence Wylie, made this observation about a French infant school when the teacher remarked of her pupils that "there is nothing serious they have to learn for a year or so": "The children, however, *do* learn important lessons. They learn to sit still for long periods. They learn to accept the discipline of the school. They even learn about learning – that is, they are impressed with the fact that to learn means to copy or to repeat what the teacher tells them." (Wylie, 1964, p. 57). Indeed, a general finding of the political socialization research is that obedience is one of the most important political lessons that children learn in school. In Hess and Torney's words, "compliance to rules and authority is the major focus of civics education in elementary schools" (Hess & Torney, 1967, p. 110). This kind of evidence leads one to question Barrow's argument that, in the early grades, anything goes so far as teaching methods are concerned: "the important thing is to get the information, the skills and the attitudes across by whatever means prove most effective" (p. 68).

Almond and Verba, for example, have suggested that the hidden curriculum of teaching methods does have an impact. In a five-nation survey they found some correlation between adults' commitment to democracy and school experiences. In particular, they argue that the existence of an open climate in the classroom, the frequent use of discussion methods, and the students' sense that they had some voice in what went on in the classroom, correlated with a sense of efficacy and competence. Their words are especially worth pondering by teachers:

> ... if in most social situations the individual finds himself subservient to some authority figure, it is likely he will expect such an authority relationship in the political sphere. On the other hand, if outside the political sphere he has opportunities to participate in a wide range of social decisions, he will probably expect to be able to participate in political decisions as well. Furthermore, participation in non-political decision-making may give one the skills needed to engage in political participation (Almond & Verba, 1965, pp. 271–2).

This argument has been best elaborated by Carole Pateman in her study of participatory democracy – a book which should be far better known to teachers than it is – and recent educational research provides support for it (Pateman, 1970; Lightfoot, 1973). To take only one recent example, Bossert's work would seem to refute Barrow: "research on the moral socialization consequences of schooling must take into account the task organization of classrooms" (Bossert, 1979, p. 100).

On all of this, however, Barrow is silent, although such evidence as this casts some doubt on his refusal to differentiate among teaching methods and approaches in the early grades. It also leads one to question whether his students would be ready to cope with the more open approaches he favours at the secondary level. It is likely that the early learning to the

effect that teachers are there to put across the information will nullify the chances of establishing a more open climate later on. The point is that, although Barrow gives a token nod to the usefulness of empirical research, he, in fact, makes no use of it. He says that "educational theory is made up of historical insights and explanations, more or less well researched hypotheses about child psychology, sociological data and philosophical inquiry" (p. 15). The "more or less" is gratuitous. Why not, one wonders, more or less respectable philosophical inquiry? *The Canadian Curriculum*, in any event, consists only of philosophical inquiry; the other ingredients are missing. The empirical data are not there, nor do Barrow's theses seem to take note of them.

Despite all these reservations, however, Barrow's essay is still very much to be welcomed. He has at least attempted to define a Canadian curriculum. It may be that at last we are ready to set the exciting curricular debates now occurring in Britain and the United States squarely within a Canadian framework. It is certainly time that we began to think about the curricular implications of knowing ourselves.

NOTES

[1] An exception should be made for A. B. Hodgetts, & P. Gallagher, *Teaching Canada for the '80's*, Toronto: O.I.S.E., 1978, which, whatever one thinks of it, at least represents an attempt to come to grips with the contents of a Canadian curriculum.

[2] Lack of space precludes my suggesting an alternative and lengthier list which I hope to publish at a later date. At any rate, readers should know that I am trying to practise what I preach.

[3] Barrow does raise such questions in his other books but, unfortunately, many Canadian teachers will not go beyond this one.

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