Review Essay

Orphans, Idiots, Lunatics, and Historians: Recent Approaches to the History of Child Welfare in Canada

John Bullen

Review of:

Patricia T. ROOKE and R.L. SCHNELL. *Discarding the Asylum: From Child Rescue to the Welfare State in English-Canada 1800-1950*. Lanham: University Press of America, 1983. Pp. xii, 413.

Harvey G. SIMMONS. *From Asylum to Welfare*. Downsview: National Institute on Mental Retardation, 1982. Pp. xv, 263.

Andrew JONES and Leonard RUTMAN. *In the Children's Aid: J.J. Kelso and Child Welfare in Ontario*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981. Pp. ix, 189.

Patricia T. ROOKE and R.L. SCHNELL, eds. *Studies in Childhood History: A Canadian Perspective*. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Limited, 1982. Pp. 212.

"The conspicuous mutes of history"[1] — this is how R.L. Schnell describes children in Canadian historical writing. This comment is strangely reminiscent of a statement Stuart Jamieson made in 1968 claiming that Canadian workers and their struggles had been the victims of a "conspiracy of silence" perpetrated and sustained by the historical profession.[2] Although not identical in nature, both statements point out that the keepers of Canada's historical record have failed to document the activities, opinions, and contributions of substantial portions of the country's population. Since 1968, of course, Jamieson and his progeny have had their day in court. Under the rubric "new social history," an ambitious group of investigators has produced an impressive number of books, articles, and theses that remove the gag from Canada's working class and complement similar trends towards the history of women, native peoples, and ethnic minorities. Happily, the process of historical discovery did not end there. After finding that workers had their own culture, organizations, and politics, historians have now discovered that they also had children. The current interest in childhood follows logically along a stream of historical consciousness that has flowed from male worker to female worker, factory to home, and union to family. Like much of the new social history, recent research on childhood themes focuses primarily

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1. R.L. SCHNELL, "Childhood Rescued and Restrained in English Canada", in Patricia T. ROOKE and R.L. SCHNELL, eds. *Studies in Childhood History: A Canadian Perspective* (Calgary, Detselig Enterprises Limited, 1982), p. 204.

2. Stuart JAMIESON, *Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada 1900-66* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1968), p. 7.

on the working class in the nineteenth century. Although much remains to be done, the existing literature represents a promising start. The "conspicuous mutes of history" have begun to speak out, if only in a barely audible whisper.

Following patterns set by foreign scholars,[3] Canadian historians of childhood and child-related topics have concentrated their efforts in the areas of family structure, child labour, education, and child welfare. Of course, these categories often overlap, and many themes in childhood history can be compressed under the general heading "socialization." In the category of family structure, historians have put quantitative methods to good use to determine the relationship between children and a range of social factors such as the life cycle, household composition, ethnicity, class, mobility, and transiency.[4] Early accounts of child labour concentrated primarily on the scandalous conditions of young workers in factories and shops and the details and weaknesses of protective legislation.[5] More recent

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3.   The most influential international works include Michael ANDERSON, *Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); Philippe ARIÈS, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1962); Lloyd de MAUSE, ed., *The History of Childhood* (New York: The Psychohistory Press, 1974); Tamara K. HAREVEN, ed., *Family and Kin in Urban Communities 1700-1930* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1977); HAREVEN, ed., *Themes in the History of the Family* (Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Society, 1978); Michael B. KATZ, *Class, Bureaucracy, and Schools: The Illusion of Educational Change in America* (New York: Praeger, 1971); Peter LASLETT, *The World We Have Lost* (London: Methuen, 1971); Peter LASLETT, ed., *Household and Family in Past Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972); David LEVINE, *Family Formation in an Age of Nascent Capitalism* (New York: Academic Press, 1977); Ivy PINCHBECK and Margaret HEWITT, *Children in English Society*, 2 volumes, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969, 1973); Anthony M. PLATT, *The Child Savers: The Invention of Delinquency* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969); Alice S. ROSSI, Jerome KAGON, and Tamara K. HAREVEN, eds., *The Family* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978); Richard SENNETT, *Families Against the City: Middle Class Homes of Industrial Chicago 1872-1890* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970); Lawrence STONE, *Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977); Stephan THERNSTROM, *Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1954); and Louise A. TILLY and Joan W. SCOTT, *Women, Work and Family* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1978). For historiographic discussions and reviews see Tamara K. HAREVEN, "The History of the Family as an Interdisciplinary Field", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 2 (1971), pp. 399-414; Stephen KERN, "The History of Childhood: A Review Article", *Journal of the History of the Behavioural Sciences*, 9, 4 (1973), pp. 406-412; Christopher LASCH, "The Family and History", *New York Review of Books*, XXII, 18 (13 November 1975), pp. 33-38; Manuel D. LOPEZ, "A Guide to the Interdisciplinary Literature of the History of Childhood", *History of Childhood Quarterly*, I, 3 (1974) pp. 463-494; C. John SOMMERVILLE, "Bibliographic Note: Towards a History of Childhood and Youth", in *The Family in History: Interdisciplinary Essays*, eds., Theodore K. RABB and Robert I. ROTBERG (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), pp. 227-235; Philip STEWART, "Toward a History of Childhood", *History of Education Quarterly*, 12, 2 (Summer 1972), pp. 198-210; Adrian WILSON, "The Infancy of the History of Childhood", *History and Theory*, XIX (1980), pp. 132-153; and John BULLEN, "Recent Views of Family and Child in Early Industrial Society", *The Register*, 2, 2 (September 1981), pp. 62-72.

4.   This school has not yet produced a large quantity of literature. The best examples to date are Gerard BOUCHARD, "Family Structures and Geographic Mobility at Laterrière, 1851-1935", *Journal of Family History* 2, 4 (Winter 1977) pp. 350-369; Chad GAFFIELD, "Cultural Challenges in Eastern Ontario: Land, Family and Education in the Nineteenth Century" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1978); GAFFIELD, "Canadian Families in Cultural Context: Hypotheses from the Mid-Nineteenth Century", Canadian Historical Association, *Historical Papers*, 1979, pp. 48-70; David GAGAN, *Hopeful Travellers: Families, Land, and Social Change in Mid-Victorian Peel County, Canada West* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981); Michael B. KATZ, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century City* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975); and KATZ, Michael J. DOUCET, and Mark J. STERN, *The Social Organization of Early Industrial Capitalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982).

5.   See for example Terry COPP, *The Anatomy of Poverty: The Condition of the Working Class in Montreal* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974); Fernand HARVEY, "Children of the Industrial Revolution in Quebec", *The Professions: Their Growth or Decline?*, ed. by J. DRUFRESNE et al., (Société de publication critère, 1979), reprinted in R. Douglas FRANCIS and Donald B. SMITH, eds., *Readings in Canadian History: Post-Confederation* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, Limited, 1982), pp. 195-204; Gregory S. KEALEY,

studies examine children's work in and around the home and emphasize the value of youngsters' contributions to the family economy.[6] In education, historians have been most concerned with the ideology and objectives of the school system, curriculum, attendance patterns, accessibility, bureaucratic centralization, and funding.[7] Neil Sutherland contends that modern historians of education fall into two broad interpretative groups — "moderate revisionists" and "radical revisionists." Neither school views the history of education as an uninterrupted progression towards the betterment of all society. Moderate revisionists, however, concede that the school system provided most of its clients with palpable social benefits while radical revisionists maintain that the education system's fundamental goal was social control of the working class and the protection of the values and privileged position of social and economic elites.[8] Studies in child welfare generally revolve around four main axes: nineteenth-century reformers' discovery of the malleability of children and the social benefits that would result from proper childhood training; the overwhelming dominance of middle-class values and players in new welfare schemes; the gradual transference of welfare responsibilities from family to state with private agencies acting as intermediaries;

Hogtown: Working Class Toronto at the Turn of the Century (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1974), also reprinted in FRANCIS and SMITH, pp. 195-204; Gregory S. KEALEY, ed., *Canada Investigates Industrialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973); Michael J. PIVA, *The Condition of the Working Class in Toronto 1900-1921* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1979); and Bryan D. PALMER, *A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario, 1860-1914* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979).

6. See for example Bettina BRADBURY, "The Family Economy and Work in an Industrializing City: Montreal in the 1870s", Canadian Historical Association, *Historical Papers*, 1979, pp. 71-96; Bettina BRADBURY, "The Fragmented Family: Family Strategies in the Face of Death, Illness, and Poverty, Montreal, 1860-1885", in *Childhood and Family in Canadian History*, Joy PARR, ed., (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), pp. 109-128; and John BULLEN, "Hidden Workers: Child Labour and the Household Economy in Late Nineteenth-Century Urban Ontario", *Labour/Le travailleur* (Forthcoming).

7. Students of education history have been well served by a rich collection of studies. See for example Bruce CURTIS, "Schoolbooks and the Myth of Curricular Republicanism: The State and the Curriculum in Canada West, 1820-1850", *Histoire sociale/Social History*, XVI, 32 (November 1983), pp. 305-329; Ian E. DAVEY, "Educational Reform and the Working Class: School Attendance in Hamilton, Ontario, 1851-1891". (Ph.D thesis, University of Toronto, 1975); Frank DENTON and Peter GEORGE, "Socio-Economic Influences on School Attendance: A Study of a Canadian County in 1871", *History of Education Quarterly*, XIV, 2 (Summer 1974), pp. 223-232; Nadia EID, "Education et classes sociales: analyse de l'idéologie conservatrice — cléricale et petite-bourgeoise — au Québec au milieu du 19ᵉ siècle", *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, 32, 2 (septembre 1978), pp. 159-179; Chad GAFFIELD, "Schooling, the Economy, and Rural Society in Nineteenth-Century Ontario", in Joy PARR, ed., *Childhood and Family in Canadian History*, pp. 159-179. Harvey J. GRAFF, *The Literacy Myth: Literacy and Social Structure in the Nineteenth Century City* (New York: Academic Press, 1979); Michael B. KATZ and Paul H. MATTINGLY, eds., *Education and Social Change: Themes from Ontario's Past* (New York: New York University Press, 1975); Neil McDONALD and Alf CHAITON, eds., *Egerton Ryerson and His Times* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1978); Neil McDONALD and David C. JONES, eds., *Approaches to the Educational Past* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1981); James H. LOVE, "Cultural Survival and Social Control: The Development of a Curriculum for Upper Canada's Common Schools in 1846", *Histoire sociale/Social History*, XV, 30 (November 1982), pp. 357-382; Alison PRENTICE, *The School Promoters: Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Upper Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977); R.M. STAMP, J.D. WILSON, and L.-P. AUDET, eds., *Canadian Education: A History* (Toronto: Prentice-Hall, 1970); R.M. STAMP et al., eds., *Approaches to Educational History* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1981); and J.D. WILSON and D.C. JONES, eds., *Schooling and Society in Twentieth Century British Columbia* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1980). A useful review article is J.D. WILSON, "Historiographical Perspectives on Canadian Educational History: A Review Essay", *The Journal of Educational Thought* (April 1977), pp. 49-63. A promising study is Bruce CURTIS's forthcoming *Building the Educational State: Pedagogy, Punishment and Popular Resistance in Canada West 1850-1871*.

8. Neil SUTHERLAND, "Towards a History of English-Canadian Youngsters", intr. to KATZ and MATTINGLY, *Education and Social Change*, pp. xi-xxxi.

and the continuing practice of child labour under the guise of apprenticeship.[9] Within this last category, four new studies have surfaced.

Based on five years' research in Canada and Great Britain, *Discarding the Asylum* by Patricia T. Rooke and R.L. Schnell covers the period 1800 to 1950. Relying largely on government and institutional sources, the book traces the changes in approaches to the welfare of dependent and neglected children in English Canada as reflected by Protestant and public institutions, primarily the orphan asylum. The authors claim that the philosophy of child welfare as it developed throughout this period rested on four main criteria: dependence, separation, protection, and delayed responsibilities. These beliefs produced a double-edged system that provided both "rescue" and "restraint" for its young charges. The study identifies three major shifts in organizational modes: philanthropy to scientific charity; voluntarism to professionalization; and professionalization to state welfarism.

Part One, "Establishing the Asylum," begins with a brief survey of the period prior to the 1820s when dependent children received no special treatment from relief agencies. Youngsters were forced to fend for themselves alongside derelict adults in houses of refuge, common gaols, and workhouses. By the 1820s, middle-class philanthropists came to believe that wayward children required special attention to rescue them from a life of crime and mould them into "honest, servile, and industrious" adults. Both objectives, of course, reflected typical middle-class interests. This shift in mentality resulted in the creation of a number of Protestant Orphans' Homes (POH) between 1820 and 1850. The orphanages offered shelter and industrial and religious training to needy children of the deserving poor,

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9.   See for example Jane-Louise K. DAWE, "The Transition from Institutional to Foster Care for Children in Ontario 1891-1921", (MSW thesis, University of Toronto, 1966); Gerald T. HACKETT, "The History of Public Education of Mentally Retarded Children in the Province of Ontario 1867-1964", (D.Ed. thesis, University of Toronto, 1969); Susan E. HOUSTON, "The Impetus to Reform: Urban Crime, Poverty and Ignorance in Ontario 1850-1875", (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1974); HOUSTON, "Victorian Origins of Juvenile Delinquency: A Canadian Experience", in KATZ and MATTINGLY, *Education and Social Change*, pp. 83-109; HOUSTON, "The 'Waifs and Strays' of a Late Victorian City: Juvenile Delinquents in Toronto", in PARR, *Childhood and Family in Canadian History*, pp. 129-142; H.C. KLASSEN, "In Search of Neglected and Delinquent Children: The Calgary Children's Aid Society 1909-1920", in *Town and City: Aspects of Western Canadian Urban Development*, ed. Alan F.J. ARTIBISE (Regina: University of Regina, 1981), pp. 375-391; Terrence MORRISON, "The Child and Urban Social Reform in Late Nineteenth Century Ontario 1875-1900", (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1971); MORRISON, "'Their Proper Sphere': Feminism, the Family, and Child-Centred Social Reform in Ontario 1875-1900", *Ontario History*, LXVIII, 1 (March 1976), pp. 45-64, and 2 (June 1976), pp. 65-74; Neil SEMPLE, "'The Nurture and Admonition of the Lord': Nineteenth-Century Canadian Methodism's Response to Childhood", *Histoire sociale/Social History*, XIV, 27 (May 1981), pp. 157-175; Richard SPLANE, *Social Welfare in Ontario 1791-1893: A Study of Public Welfare Administration* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965); and Elisabeth WALLACE, "The Changing Canadian State: A Study of the Conception of the State as Revealed in Canadian Social Legislation 1867-1948", (Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1950). The issue of child health care has been dealt with by Linda S. SIEGAL, "Child Health and Development in English Canada 1790-1850", in *Health, Disease and Medicine: Essays in Canadian History*, ed. Charles ROLAND (Toronto: The Hannah Institute for the History of Medicine, 1984); Neil SUTHERLAND, *Children in English-Canadian Society 1880-1920: Framing the Twentieth Century Consensus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976); and SUTHERLAND, "'To Create a Strong and Healthy Race': School Children in the Public Health Movement 1880-1914", in KATZ and MATTINGLY, *Education and Social Change*, pp. 133-161. A special group of British immigrant children has received significant attention. See for example Kenneth BAGNELL, *The Little Immigrants: The Orphans Who Came to Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1980); Gail CORBETT, *Barnardo Children in Canada* (Peterborough: Woodland Pub., 1981); Phyllis HARRISON, *The Home Children: Their Personal Stories* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer, 1979); Joy PARR, *Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada 1869-1924* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1980); Wesley TURNER, "80 Stout and Healthy Looking Girls", *Canada: An Historical Magazine*, 3, 2 (December 1975), pp. 36-49; and TURNER, "Miss Rye's Children and the Ontario Press 1875", *Ontario History*, 68 (September 1976), pp. 169-203.

most of whom had living parents, and arranged apprenticeships for older children as agricultural labourers or domestic servants. In this way, the POHs satisfied the first three criteria of child welfare, but failed to deliver on the fourth by turning their older wards into a cheap labour force. Despite their middle-class backing, the POHs stuck their occupants with a stigma that lasted for life. Rooke and Schnell remark: "...the taint of being a charity child, even from a respectable orphanage, clung like mildew."[10] Shortly after the POHs had established their dominant position in the welfare field, popular views on childhood shifted once again.

Part Two, "Transforming the Asylum," discusses the new perceptions of child welfare that emerged in the 1890s. Most reformers now agreed that only the natural setting of a family provided dependent children with a fair opportunity to develop proper social and moral values. Parentless youngsters and those whose natural family settings were found to be unwholesome or inadequate were now to be placed in foster homes where they would be treated as regular members of another family. The primary institutional expression of this view was the Children's Aid Society (CAS), the first Canadian branch of which appeared in Toronto in 1891 as a result of the initiative of J.J. Kelso. This approach gained ground in 1893 when the Ontario government sanctioned the activities of the CAS with the passage of the Children's Protection Act and appointed Kelso Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children. Despite many foster parents' tendency to treat their wards as domestic servants, the foster-home model eventually superseded the institutional and binding-out approach of the POH. Moreover, the creation of provincial departments of neglected and dependent children accelerated the move towards the professionalization of child welfare. This section also describes the contentious debates that took place over the placement of dependent British children in Canadian homes. Rooke and Schnell estimate that approximately one-third of immigrant children received fair treatment, one-third encountered tolerable conditions, and one-third were exploited and defrauded.

Part Three, "Discarding the Asylum," focuses on the professionalization of charitable work and the emergence of the welfare state in the twentieth century. The authors chronicle the demise of the old-fashioned philanthropists and trace the rise of new faces and forces such as Charlotte Whitton and the Canadian Council on Child Welfare. Although it was not a smooth transition, the emergence of the professional social worker and the institutionalization of policies under state authority finally guaranteed the fourth criterion of child welfare — delayed responsibilities. Rooke and Schnell conclude: "By mid-twentieth century, the state had taken on the basic characteristics of the nineteenth-century asylum and, thus, became the modern 'most ordered of rescues' for all."[11]

Discarding the Asylum offers a detailed inside look at institutions and policies that shaped the lives of thousands of helpless Canadian children. The study forcefully demonstrates how changing perceptions of childhood and society compelled both private and public agencies to readjust their approach to child welfare. But the book is slightly flawed in both a theoretical and practical sense. Rooke and Schnell state in their introduction that they refuse to be prisoners of either the "whig" (liberal) or "social control" (Marxist) school of interpretation. In this way, apparently, the authors are free to interpret their data in an objective and undogmatic fashion. Aside from correcting some of the excessive claims of the "social control" school, however, the evidence presented by Rooke and Schnell

10. Patricia T. ROOKE and R.L. SCHNELL, *Discarding the Asylum: From Child Rescue to the Welfare State in English-Canada 1800-1950* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983), p. 163.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 413.

upholds the view that child welfare measures were designed primarily by conservative middle-class reformers who desired to maintain the class structure and inequalities of urban-industrial society. This constitutes social control. Clearly, no highly-sophisticated middle-class conspiracy extended over this period, but in most cases child welfare policy served the interests of its framers more so than its recipients. In the face of this evidence, the authors' desire to avoid dogmatism only obfuscates their own analysis.

In a more practical vein, *Discarding the Asylum* suffers as a result of the extensive time period it covers. Rooke and Schnell criticize other authors of childhood history for defining their topic too narrowly and limiting their chronology. Yet it is precisely the lengthy time frame of 150 years that forces Rooke and Schnell to gloss over several crucial social developments related to their main theme. The study spans all of the nineteenth century and one-half of the twentieth, yet makes only marginal references to urbanization, industrialization, normal immigration, advances in education, wars, and depressions. Discussion of at least some of these developments would have placed changing approaches to child welfare within a wider and more enlightening societal context. The authors' criticisms of the POH's practice of binding-out its older charges, for example, would have been more understandable placed within the context of the general decline of apprenticeship that resulted from the Industrial Revolution.[12] In the final few pages of the book, the authors discuss the effect of the Depression on attitudes towards the welfare state, but by then the analysis appears to be only an interesting afterthought.

Harvey G. Simmons faces similar challenges in *From Asylum to Welfare,* a study of mental retardation policy in Ontario from 1831 to 1980. Although Simmons' book does not focus exclusively on children, it includes much valuable material on youngsters in its discussions of the trials and tribulations of the mentally handicapped community. The author starts from the premise that mental retardation policy in Ontario has always sought four main objectives: to provide asylum for mentally handicapped people incapable of surviving on their own; to provide education for those capable of learning; to exert social control over those who threaten society's norms; to provide welfare for those capable of surviving in the community with some assistance.

Part One of Simmons' study covers the years 1831 to 1900. This section explains that early mental retardation policy aimed at serving mentally ill people (lunatics), who were believed to be curable, while ignoring mentally retarded individuals (idiots), considered incurable. In 1841, the Provincial Lunatic Asylum opened in Toronto to care for and attempt to cure the mentally ill. Mentally retarded people, however, having nowhere else to turn except the common gaols and workhouses, quickly flooded into the Asylum, thus preventing it from carrying out its curative duties properly. The over-crowded conditions of the Provincial Lunatic Asylum eventually forced the opening of a new institution in Orillia in 1861. By the late 1870s, the asylum model began to give way to a custodial model. Simmons explains the difference: "Mentally ill and retarded people were no longer going to be protected from society, rather, society was to be protected from them."[13]

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12.   The authors of the *Report of the Royal Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labor in Canada* found the situation critical enough in 1889 to declare: "The apprentice system is almost a thing of the past. The factory system, the introduction of machinery and the division of labor has nearly put an end to it." *First Report of the Royal Labor Commission*, 1889, p. 12. For workers' reactions see Eugene FORSEY, *Trade Unions in Canada 1812-1902* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), pp. 125-35 and Bryan PALMER, *A Culture in Conflict*, pp. 76-78 and p. 93.

13.   Harvey G. SIMMONS, *From Asylum to Welfare* (Downsview: National Institute on Mental Retardation, 1982), p. 22.

Throughout this period, institutions in Europe and the United States were experimenting with training programs for mentally retarded children, but the Ontario government refused to act on inspector Langmuir's recommendation for a children's training school, in the belief that they were incurable. Despite this position, the Orillia asylum implemented teaching programs near the end of the century. Simmons concludes that mental retardation policy in this period was makeshift in nature and was determined by a handful of politicians, inspectors, and bureaucrats with relatively little concern for larger political questions.

The years 1900 to 1945 form the focus of Part Two of Simmons' study. This section explains the origins and impact of the Myth of the menace of the feeble-minded, a vicious but widely-held belief that mental illness was hereditary and caused an assortment of social problems such as poverty, crime, and lack of moral restraint. Influenced by these ideas, a group of citizens concerned with the possible links between feeble-mindedness and social ills such as prostitution, illegitimacy, and delinquency, founded the Provincial Association for the Care of the Feeble-Minded in 1911 and successfully lobbied the provincial government to institute a program of special education classes for mentally handicapped children. The school system, however, used these classes more to identify and segregate mentally handicapped children than to educate them, and many parents refused to enrol their youngsters fearing that it would be the first step towards permanent confinement at Orillia. The story reaches a turning point in 1919 with the publication of the *Report of the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Mentally Defective and Feeble-Minded* (The Hodgins Report). Hodgins recommended strong measures to separate the dangerous from the harmless feeble-minded and treat each accordingly. The Ontario government implemented few of Hodgins' suggestions, but his findings influenced training programs at Orillia. The clock was turned back in 1939 with the publication of the Royal Commission on Public Welfare which recommended compulsory institutionalization and sterilization of the mentally retarded. Outside of establishing the Department of Public Welfare in 1930, the government acted on few of the report's suggestions, thus demonstrating its ability to ignore bad commissions as well as good ones. At the same time, a handful of enlightened custodians at Orillia were pursuing the possibility of returning mentally handicapped children to the community and continuing their treatment there. Simmons contends that policies throughout this period blamed the mentally retarded for their own condition and placed social protection above care for the handicapped. Although almost 3,000 mentally retarded children were attending special education classes by 1939, many more mentally handicapped individuals remained in need of adequate care.

Part Three moves the story from 1945 to 1980. The most significant development in the early part of this period was the formation of the Parents' Council for Retarded Children in 1948, an outgrowth of the special education classes. This dynamic lobby group, which became the Ontario Association for Retarded Children in 1953, challenged the outdated concept of custodialism and fought for the establishment of special schools and community-based group homes. With substantial portions of the press and public behind it, this group, which changed its name a second time to become the Ontario Association for the Mentally Retarded (OAMR) in 1965, successfully took advantage of growing popular support for welfare measures and general increases in education funding to force the government to accept full financial responsibility for institutions for the mentally retarded. The OAMR met with only partial success, however, in gaining government funding for community-based residences. In 1974, the government shifted the responsibility for mentally retarded people from the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Initially viewed as a victory by the OAMR, this move symbolized the

Ontario government's recognition of mentally retarded people as regular members of the community with entitlement to specific rights and guarantees. But Simmons warns: "In a province run by a party and a government whose concern for the social services has been lukewarm at best, it is questionable whether the 1974 switch was a victory or rather an exchange of one set of problems for another."[14] Despite institutional improvements over the years and the recent introduction of community programs, Simmons maintains that mentally retarded individuals have always been subjected to other people's half-hearted and self-serving plans and even today remain at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

From Asylum to Welfare combines social history and social policy analysis in a highly professional and polished manner. The book projects powerful and sometimes touching images of mentally handicapped people and their supporters struggling to achieve decent services in the face of obstinate governments and an often hostile and ignorant public. Indeed, the reader cheers silently with each small victory of the OAMR. The study explores the philosophic foundations of social welfare, offers detailed analysis of the role of power structures, and includes adequate explanations of related developments such as urbanization and industrialization, thus avoiding the contextual problem that permeates *Discarding the Asylum*. The empirical side of the book is practically flawless; its shortcomings lie almost entirely in the theoretical realm.

From the outset, Simmons rejects the three dominant theoretical approaches that other authors have applied to the study of mental retardation policy. These he summarizes as follows: 1) historical — an approach that stresses the power of social forces that lie beyond the control of individuals; 2) social control — a Marxist analysis which claims that the primary objective of mental retardation policy was to control social deviants and protect middle-class interests; and 3) phenomenological — an argument that emphasizes the input and influence of well-intentioned doctors and highly-placed officials.[15] Simmons adopts a self-styled "eclectic" approach which leads to a final analysis that he describes as "bureaucratic-political." This approach places great emphasis on the personal views of policy-makers, while eschewing motives that they did not have, and points out the unintended impact of certain policies that resulted from the varying interpretations and motivations of those responsible for implementing the policies. Despite Simmons' refusal to follow a predetermined theoretical approach, the evidence he presents nonetheless weighs heavily on the side of the social control thesis. Of the four major objectives of mental retardation policy that Simmons identifies in his introduction, social control recurs most frequently. The author makes a particularly strong case for this analysis around the question of the sexual activity of the feeble-minded. Moreover, Simmons admits: "Custodialism was specifically intended as a social control device."[16] Simmons' avoidance of a restrictive conceptual framework resembles the approach adopted by Rooke and Schnell in *Discarding the Asylum*. All three authors deliberately tear apart the jigsaw puzzle of ideological analysis; but when they re-assemble the pieces, the picture looks much the same. Like Rooke and Schnell, Simmons avoids locking himself into an ideological straitjacket. Straitjackets, of course, are uncomfortable and constraining apparel. But had these writers donned the garb, they at least could have made a strong case that the fit was right. In place of a single ide-

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14.   *Ibid.*, p. 246.
15.   For another discussion of the various approaches to the history of mental retardation policy see Gerald GROB, "Rediscovering Asylums: The Unhistorical History of the Mental Hospital", *Hastings Center Report*, Vol. 7, August 1977. I am indebted to Donna McIntyre for bringing this article to my attention.
16.   SIMMONS. p. 46.

ological approach, Simmons substitutes detailed discussions of complex theoretical questions which confuse more than they enlighten and severely detract from an otherwise compelling study. Such an approach occasionally results in efforts to make the obvious sound profound. For example, Simmons writes: "Doubtless the influence of ideas was extremely important in shaping the policy context."[17] Can policy exist without some idea behind it? Many learned readers will struggle to see the relevance of Simmons' theoretical lucubrations; the casual reader will almost certainly abandon the book at this point, and thus miss out on an important education.

Andrew Jones and Leonard Rutman encounter no such problems in *In the Children's Aid: J.J. Kelso and Child Welfare in Ontario*. Less ambitious in its scope than the two preceding monographs, this book, based primarily on Kelso's twenty-nine volumes of personal papers, presents a straight-forward account of the life and career of one of Ontario's best-known social reformers and child-savers. The study begins with a brief examination of Kelso's childhood experiences in his native Ireland and moves on to describe his early career as a printer and a journalist in industrial Toronto in the 1880s. Caught up in the whirlwind of social reform that embraced late Victorian Toronto, the young Kelso soon developed an interest in the prevention of cruelty to animals and children. This concern inspired him to establish the Toronto Humane Society in 1887 and the Children's Aid Society (CAS) in 1891. Obstacles encountered by the CAS in carrying out its aim of removing mistreated and needy children from their natural families and placing them in foster homes led Kelso to lobby the provincial government for legislation that would sanction and promote the Society's work. This pressure resulted in the passage of the Children's Protection Act and Kelso's appointment as Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children in 1893. Despite Kelso's genuine concern for the welfare of needy children, Jones and Rutman portray him in this period as a somewhat self-centred individual occasionally preoccupied with thoughts of wealth, success, and his own leadership abilities. Moreover, Jones and Rutman assert: "Self-assurance and readiness to impose and enforce his own standards on other members of the community...characterized Kelso's approach to social and moral reform."[18]

As the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children, Kelso performed his duties with boundless enthusiasm and energy. By 1914, he had set in place a province-wide network of CASs, and his influence reached across the country and the continent. Kelso maintained his original belief in the principle of voluntarism, but simultaneously recognized the need for increased government participation in child welfare programs. Nearing the end of his public career, Kelso clashed with the rising professional bureaucrats and watched painfully as the fire-and-brimstone approach to child-saving that he had forged as a young man gave way to routine administration. Despite his decline in the years following World War I, Jones and Rutman proclaim Kelso the undisputed chief architect and builder of Ontario's child welfare system.

In one sense, *In the Children's Aid* succeeds to a greater degree than *Discarding the Asylum* and *From Asylum to Welfare*, largely because it sets itself a more limited, and therefore more achievable, agenda. The book provides vivid descriptions of urban life and skilfully traces the rise of social reform movements and the expanding role of government

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17.   *Ibid.*
18.   Andrew JONES and Leonard RUTMAN, *In the Children's Aid: J.J. Kelso and Child Welfare in Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), p. 42.

in welfare schemes. The study glosses over and simplifies a number of complex social philosophies as they arise in the narrative, but leaves them understandable in their fundamentals. In this area, the book would have benefited from a more extensive discussion of international developments in child welfare, especially in view of Kelso's proclivity to draw the inspiration for his schemes from other countries. The study portrays Kelso in a sympathetic light, but stops short of hagiography. Despite his notable contributions to social welfare, Kelso appears as a paternalist who "accepted prevailing notions relating to poverty and its causes"[19] and "left unquestioned existing patterns of social stratification."[20] Still, these are guarded criticisms. What Jones and Rutman describe as minor flaws and inconsistencies in Kelso's beliefs, less generous critics will identify as fundamental contradictions in his social philosophy.

The last item under review is a collection of essays edited by Patricia T. Rooke and R.L. Schnell entitled *Studies in Childhood History: A Canadian Perspective*. The editors concede that the book makes no attempt at unity and state that their purpose is "pedagogical and pragmatic." Part One, "Theoretical Perspectives," opens with an article by Brian W. Taylor that defends Jeremy Bentham's application of Utilitarianism to primary education. Taylor describes Utilitarianism's "scientific" approach to learning and living but remains unconvincing that Bentham's pursuit of "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" could result in anything other than the greatest happiness of the most powerful and privileged.[21] The pragmatic ideas of American education theorist John Dewey are scrutinized next in an article by Evelina Orteza y Miranda. Dewey believed that it was essential for children to interact with their environment through a process of inquiry leading to knowledge which in turn could be used to advance desirable social goals. Unfortunately, jargon consumes much of this article and the practical application of Dewey's theory remains vague.[22] Peter J. Miller completes the opening trio of essays with an article on American psychologists Homer Lane and J.B. Watson. Unlike Taylor and Miranda, Miller adopts a critical approach to the practical applications of the opposing theories of Lane and Watson. After revealing the shortcomings of Lane's libertarian methods and Watson's authoritarian approach, Miller concludes: "...any theory of childrearing which appears to contain even an element of a theory of social progress should be treated with the utmost scepticism and with the most modest hope"[23] — a deft observation and good advice for the first two authors.

The second part of the collection, "Geo-cultural Case Studies," contains five historical essays. In an article on nineteenth-century child welfare, editors Rooke and Schnell apply the thesis of *Discarding the Asylum* to children's institutions in Atlantic Canada.[24] Continuing Neil Sutherland's work,[25] Norah Lewis examines children's health programs in urban British Columbia between 1900 and 1939. This factual but uncontroversial article provides convincing proof of the need for such measures and claims that the programs had a two-fold purpose: to enrich the health of children, and to employ them as agents to improve

19.   *Ibid.*, p. 35.

20.   *Ibid.*, p. 123.

21.   Brian W. TAYLOR, "Utilitarianism and the Child: Jeremy Bentham", in ROOKE and SCHNELL, *Studies in Childhood History*, pp. 4-27.

22.   Evelina ORTEZA y MIRANDA, "Pragmatism and the Child: John Dewey", in *Ibid.*, pp. 29-56.

23.   Peter J. MILLER, "Psychology and the Child: Homer Lane and J.B. Watson", in *Ibid.*, p. 78.

24.   Patricia T. ROOKE and R.L. SCHNELL, "Guttersnipes and Charity Children: 19th Century Child Rescue in the Atlantic Provinces", in *Ibid.*, pp. 82-104.

25.   See n. 9.

the health environment in their homes.[26] Rebecca Coulter contributes a brightly-written article that studies the application of the Children's Protection Act to juvenile delinquents in Alberta from 1909 to 1929. According to Coulter, the three dominant components of child welfare mentality in this period were a belief in prolonged and protected childhood, emphasis on environmental influences, and the desire to reform rather than to punish juvenile delinquents. The author concludes that "on the whole it is safe to say that the sentiment and ideas of social reform continued to inform practices in a major way throughout the period."[27] An essay by David C. Jones examines the unsuccessful efforts of rural advocates between 1900 and 1925 to keep prairie children on the land. Jones exposes the myth of the wholesomeness of rural life and argues that an urban-oriented school system, the routine hardships of agricu- ltural life, and the lack of growth capital led a majority of country-raised children to opt for life in the city.[28]

One article in this section, Leslie Savage's study of the Sisters of Misericordia in Edmonton from 1900 to 1906, warrants closer examination. Founded in Montreal in 1848, the Sisters of Misericordia provided care and counselling for unwed mothers and their children. Shortly after their arrival in Edmonton in 1900, the Sisters shifted their focus from female reform and child rescue to general medical services and hospital nursing. Savage argues that the good Sisters changed their habits, so to speak, as a result of the different socio-economic conditions and moral attitudes of early twentieth-century Edmonton as opposed to nineteenth-century Montreal. Savage contends that greater female opportunities for marriage in the West as a result of the shortage of women, diminishing French Catholic influence, a higher number of economic opportunities for women, and a more tolerant view of illegitimacy combined to reduce the need of the Sisters' original services. The significance of Savage's article lies not in its subject matter but in its exposition of the power of local forces to resist values and practices imposed from outside and the ability of a transplanted institution to adapt to new circumstances and survive as an important community service. Savage's vibrant demonstration of the impact of historical forces over time, distance, and culture illuminates one of the major universal themes of historical writing. It is a fine example of the craft of history.[29]

R.L. Schnell closes the collection with a short article the discusses the nature and challenges of childhood studies, reiterates the themes of the preceding essays, and offers a summary overview of child welfare practices in English Canada, based largely on his work with co-editor Rooke.[30] This piece raises some interesting historiographic and methodological questions, but the essays in the collection differ so widely in content that a concluding chapter is unnecessary, and this one in particular appears to be out of place.

A collection of essays, of course, is only as strong as its component parts. But this book exhibits structural problems apart from the quality of the articles it contains. From the outset, it is odd that a book subtitled *A Canadian Perspective* should open with three

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26. Norah LEWIS, "Physical Perfection for Spiritual Welfare: Health Care for the Urban Child, 1900-1939", in ROOKE and SCHNELL, *Studies in Childhood History*, pp. 135-166.
27. Rebecca COULTER, "'Not to Punish but to Reform': Juvenile Delinquency and Children's Protection Act in Alberta, 1909-1929", in *Ibid.*, p. 168.
28. David C. JONES, "'We can't live on air all the time:' Country Life and the Prairie Child", in *Ibid.*, pp. 185-202.
29. Leslie SAVAGE, "Perspectives on Illegitimacy: The Changing Role of the Sisters of Misericordia in Edmonton, 1900-1906", in *Ibid.*, pp. 105-133.
30. R.L. SCHNELL, "Children Rescued and Restrained in English Canada", in *Ibid.* pp. 204-212.

articles on the educational ideas of British and American thinkers. It would be parochial and inaccurate, of course, to suggest that Canadians have not been influenced by theories developed elsewhere. But no subsequent essay in this collection reflects these ideas in any direct sense, and the reader is left struggling to see the relevance of these opening chapters. On the other hand, the editors surely could have located or commissioned essays on John Strachan, Egerton Ryerson, J.J. Kelso, or James L. Hughes. These Canadian gentlemen had much to say about education. In view of this emphasis on education theory and Schnell's claim in his conclusion that schooling plays a critical role in shaping the idea of childhood, it is also surprising that the study does not contain an article on the common school system. Lastly, the book steadfastly ignores central Canada despite the national scope implied by its subtitle. In fact, the study focuses almost exclusively on Western Canada, and seven of the nine contributors live or work in Alberta. Is this the revenge of the regionalists, or could it be that the editors' budget limited them to phone calls within a single area code? This is one case where a book appears to be less than the sum of its parts, but students of history will find the essays in Part Two of the collection to be valuable additions to the existing literature.

Several common threads tie together the foregoing studies. They all analyze the changes in the perceptions and practices of child welfare over the last century and a half and trace the transition from philanthropic voluntarism to state welfarism. All four items cogently demonstrate that child welfare policies, even when they appear to be break-throughs, conform to the dominant social and political views of the times. The four studies also expose the class bias of reform measures and challenge the perception that each stage in the evolution of the welfare state represented one more step towards social harmony and equality. In this vein, they provide evidence to support Allan Moscovitch's contention that although public welfare policies have fortified the security of most Canadians, they have in no way altered the distribution of wealth and power in society.[31]

These books build on the strengths of previous works, but they also perpetuate some common weaknesses. Ironically, contrary to social history's central concern with the lives of ordinary Canadians, these monographs focus primarily on society's exceptional cases. Many ordinary children whose families neither basked in the splendour of wealth and power nor grovelled in the shadow of poverty and neglect await their share of attention. Fur-thermore, in almost every case, the image of childhood these books project is focused through the lens of middle-class social reform. This is understandable, given the nature of the available written sources. But these problems suggest that historians of childhood should be prepared to explore alternative avenues of investigation, including oral history and material history.[32] Despite these limitations, the studies under review illuminate a

    31.   Allan MOSCOVITCH, "Social Welfare and Social Policy in Canada: Historical Background and Sources", in *The Welfare State in Canada: A Selected Bibliography 1840 to 1978*, eds. Allan MOSCOVITCH with Theresa JENNISSEN and Peter FINDLAY (Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1983), p. vii.

    32.   Examples of oral history with references to childhood include Daphne READ et al., eds., *The Great War and Canadian Society: An Oral History*, (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1978); Jane SYNGE, "Immigrant Communities — British and Continental European — in Early Twentieth Century Hamilton", *Oral History*, 4 (1967); SYNGE, "The Transition from School to Work: Growing Up Working Class in Hamilton in Early 20th Century Hamilton, Ontario", in *Childhood and Adolescence in Canada*, ed., K. ISHWARAN (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, Ryerson, 1979), pp. 249-269; and other interviews conducted by Synge reproduced in Irving ABELLA and David MILLAR, eds., *The Canadian Worker in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 97-104. A handy guide to the methods of oral history is Derek REIMER, ed., assisted by David MATTISON and Allen W. SPECHT, *Voices: A Guide to Oral History* (Victoria: 1984). See also Paul THOMPSON, *The Voices of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 97-104; and THOMPSON, *The Edwardians*

precious stage of the life cycle rarely seen in conventional texts. Most importantly, they approach an understanding of the marginal existence of the dispossessed and handicapped child — a world of suffering and despair that only those who live on the edge of society can truly know.

(London: Paladin, 1975). For examples of material history and childhood see Janet HOLMES, "Toys and Games", in *The Book of Canadian Antiques*, ed. D.B. WEBSTER (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, Ryerson, 1974), pp. 187-202; HOLMES, "Deck the Halls: Toys for a Canadian Christmas", *Rotunda*, 11, 4 (Winter 1978-79), pp. 4-11; Jeanne MINHINNICK, *At Home in Upper Canada* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1970); Thomas SCHELERTH, ed., *Material Culture Studies in America* (Nashville: The American Association for State and Local History, 1982); and the special issue of the *Material History Bulletin*, Vol. 21.