

## Compte rendu

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*Histoire de l'enseignement technique et professionnel. L'enseignement spécialisé au Québec 1867 à 1982.* Jean-Pierre Charland, Québec, Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1982.  
Pp. 482, illus.

par Richard A. Jarrell

*HSTC Bulletin: Journal of the History of Canadian Science, Technology and Medicine / HSTC Bulletin : revue d'histoire des sciences, des techniques et de la médecine au Canada*, vol. 7, n° 3, (25) 1983, p. 172-173.

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## BOOK REVIEWS/COMPTEs RENDUS

*Histoire de l'enseignement technique et professionnel. L'enseignement spécialisé au Québec 1867 à 1982.* Jean-Pierre Charland, Québec, Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1982. Pp. 482, illus.

Amongst the standard histories of Canadian education, such as those of Phillips, Stamp, Audet *et al.*, technical education or the history of applied science education has received short shrift. Whether this has been due to a reticence on the part of historians to tackle what seems to be a difficult area--such seems to be true of histories of scientific education--or whether the topic is dismissed as boring or irrelevant to the mainstream of Canadian educational ideas is not clear. There is a dearth of such literature. For technical education, we do have institutional histories for several engineering schools, Robert Stamp's doctoral dissertation on technical education from the 1870s and scattered articles on the mechanics' institute movement. With the publication of Jean-Pierre Charland's substantial study of Québec technical education since Confederation, we now have one solid piece of work for one province. Hopefully it will act as a model, if not structurally and methodologically, at least in terms of depth and coverage, for others.

Charland's work is actually closer to the labour history approach than to traditional educational history. While he obviously owes a debt to Louis-Philippe Audet's work, and exhibits some of the same approaches to social history as Claude Galarneau in the latter's *Les collèges classiques au Canada français* (Charland's book is a revision of a Laval dissertation), his primary focus is the working man and woman of Québec rather than structures or curricula. His neo-marxist bias remains balanced and unobtrusive compared with several Canadian labour historians.

The history of technical education in Québec falls into a few, clear-cut periods and Charland's approach, generally chronological, follows the movements. The first period, from Confederation to 1925, he calls 'une préhistoire interminable,' because the growing need for technical education at a time when Québec became both industrialized and urbanized was not met with any uniform response. By the middle 1870s the provincial government had effectively abdicated its educational responsibilities to the Church which, in turn, never quite came to terms with the new order. Publically-funded schools such as the night schools of the Conseil des arts et manufactures, the technical schools of Québec and Montréal and the Ecole polytechnique, along with the older-style collèges industriels, went some distance towards providing the needed education but was no true system. The second period, from the 1925 conference on technical education organized by Athanase David to the formation of Ministère du Bien-être social et de la jeunesse in 1946 includes the slow movement towards government control over technical education because of the demands of industrialization, the Depression and World War II. This, too, is the period in which the Federal presence, after the Robertson Commission Report of 1913, began to be felt in the provinces. The period from 1946 to 1982 is largely the story of increasing government organization to bring the entire school system into line.

Approximately half of the book concentrates on the post-war period and documents the steps, in one small area, how the Québec government--especially after 1960--came to have such an extensive control over society. Most of the twentieth-century material is drawn from official documents but this is a familiar problem to anyone who has tried to work with scientific or technological issues for modern Canada, given the spottiness of the archival base.

In such a wide-ranging work, a few lacunae are likely. One example is in the treatment of the history of the Conseil des arts et manufactures, created by the Chauveau government in 1869, then re-established in the early 1870s, to provide part-time technical instruction. Because the author begins with Confederation, he overlooks some pre-history: in this case, the Conseil was not a creation *de novo* by Chauveau but rather the reincarnation of the old Lower Canada Board of Arts and Manufactures, established by the United Province in 1857. That Board did, in fact, foster technical courses in several mechanics' institutes in Québec. What is interesting is why Québec would choose to resuscitate an essentially British model while Ontario disbanded its Board in 1868.

This is to quibble: Charland has tackled an immense problem and made substantial progress in elucidating the issues. The *Histoire de l'enseignement technique et professionnel* will be required reading for anyone interested in inter-provincial comparisons of post-Confederation technical instruction and to those interested in labour history but have lacked a unified body of information on the educational aspects of working class life in Québec.

RAJ