

Reinterpreting New Zealand school patriotism

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ABSTRACT

New Zealand education historians have belatedly become aware of sociological perspectives. Where such perspectives have been recognised, there has been a tendency to preface and conclude historical research with theoretical generalisations, leaving the reader to make the connections. What has been lacking so far, however, is any attempt to critically examine the role of critical theory in reassessing specific problems in education history. My intention here is to reinterpret my earlier research into the growth and apparent decline of patriotism in New Zealand primary schools, and to indicate directions for further study.

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At various times, I have reached very different conclusions about the significance of school patriotism during the interwar period:

1. ... a repeat of the ... patriotic fervour of 1919-1921 was impossible. The second post-war world would be shaped around an altogether different ideal.¹
2. During periods of economic recession schools become major vehicles for the indoctrination of patriotic ideologies which promote the value of unity and loyalty in order to draw attention away from existing economic and social divisions.²
3. To argue ... that certain periods of patriotic fervour illustrate how a capitalist society under threat utilises the schools for its own devices would be an unjustifiable departure from the available evidence.³

Each of these conclusions embodies a theoretical perspective of sorts, stated or implied. A critical assessment would label the first as a rather smug liberal progressivism, the second as somewhat crude Marxism, and the third as an unconvincing attempt to avoid 'the theoretical' altogether. Each is probably arguable, but hardly sustainable in the light of the present state-of-the-art. In general terms, they do not adequately explain the phenomenon of school patriotism. More specifically, they fail to address some key questions, the answers to which are essential if we are to further our understanding of just what was happening in education and in society during the

interwar period in New Zealand. What was school patriotism designed to accomplish? Was it simply a panic measure, or was it a more deliberate response to a set of economic and social problems as they were perceived by a particular group? If school patriotism 'declined', then was this decline a sign that things really were improving in New Zealand education (the morality play scenario), or was it indicative of a more sinister strategy? Were there more profound changes taking place in society which might subordinate any debate over intentions and motives?

Turning first, to motives and intentions, it takes little probing to discover that school patriotism was viewed by educational authorities as a useful means of social control for both pupils and teachers. Indeed, there was no shortage of people during the early post-World War One years who not only believed youth were in danger of being subverted, but thought school-based patriotism could provide a powerful counter-acting force. The Prime Minister, W. F. Massey, was convinced that "our rising generation has a great deal to learn - they want to be taught pride of race ... pride in Empire and love of country; they want to be taught what is meant by the Union Jack ...".⁴ During the early 1920s the frequent use of military terminology illustrates clearly that, for many frightened middle-class New Zealanders, the war against Germany had been replaced by an even more dangerous class war. R. A. Wright epitomised contemporary government views that anti-strike legislation was vital to the national interest because "...in New Zealand we have seen a series of strikes, first in one place and then in another, as if worked on some systematic plan".⁵ A similar urgency is evident among educationalists. The first issue of *National Education* warned that while industrial strikes appeared sporadic, "actually they may be demonstrations in the nature of patrol operations screening the movements of the extremist forces in industrial strike".⁶ Canterbury school inspectors saw good citizenship instruction as a necessity " ... as strong and insidious forces are at work in certain quarters which may lead sooner or later to the disruption of society and of the general happiness of our people".⁷

As one would expect, given the prevailing sentiment, the official response became increasingly comprehensive. The then Minister of Education, C. J. Parr, was to claim that one of the major educational accomplishments of the early post-war years had been "...the revision of the school syllabus in history and civics emphasising inculcation of the principles of patriotism and loyalty to King and Country".⁸ School patriotism, however, went rapidly beyond even this, to embrace compulsory flag saluting regulations (May 1921) and the introduction of loyalty oaths for all New Zealand teachers (January 1922).⁹ In addition, it had some influence on various regulations designed to secure a closer supervision of teachers' professional work, such as making teachers' workbooks mandatory.¹⁰

Obviously, the sheer extent of patriotic reaction in the schools requires explanation. When I first examined school patriotism I attributed its growth in the early 1920s to several, more or less equal causes; the desire to see youth commemorate the war, the projection of wartime hysteria well into the following decade, the continuing naval rivalry between the Great Powers which necessitated a public sympathetic to future naval requirements, and the fear of militant socialist subversion.¹¹ In a society where overt school patriotism was now rare, it became all too easy to dismiss interwar school patriotism as a fascinating but ultimately irrelevant specialist study. By 1980, however, anti-union and anti-socialist sentiment was rising and the Business and Economic Education Committee (BEEC), set up by the combined New Zealand Chambers of Commerce had promoted a new series of economic studies booklets for secondary schools on the grounds that "For too long the business community has allowed its foes to report it, its critics to judge it, and its enemies to define it".¹² Educational rhetoric was sounding rather too familiar. I began to re-order the 'causes' of school patriotism during the 1920s and to assign a key role to the fear of socialism. Now I stressed the role of the press in creating an atmosphere of fear and loathing towards militant socialism, the willingness of the government to utilise the Bolshevik bogeyman as a political weapon and the signal impact of the Weitzel case as a catalyst in provoking further legislation on school patriotism.¹³

Even then it seemed simply common sense to back these assumptions with Murray's claim that, as in the United States over a broadly similar period, "...harassed by the rantings and ravings of a small group of business and employers organisations and assaulted daily by the scare propaganda of the patriotic societies, and the general press, the national mind ultimately succumbed to hysteria".¹⁴ In any case, sociologists of the structural-functionalist school, such as N. J. Smelser, appeared to have conclusively demonstrated that, in terms of collective behaviour theory, school patriotism could best be seen as 'a value-orientated movement', "...a collective attempt to restore, protect, modify or create values (love of country, loyalty, obedience) in the name of a generalised belief" (that New Zealand was filled with Bolshevik agitators, against whom youth had no skills of counteraction).¹⁵

Today, such explanations seem rather inadequate. This is not to deny that, like their British and American counterparts, many New Zealanders firmly believed that "...a tidal wave of revolution seemed to be curling westward".¹⁶ The difficulty with this as a complete explanation however, is that we learn very little about the work that the education system in general or school patriotism in particular was intended to perform during this period; almost nothing about the nature of education with its hierarchical relationships between decision-makers, bureaucrats, teachers and pupils; and even less regarding the interaction of school patriotism with those whom it was supposed to shape. In Williams' words:

The pattern of meanings and values through which people conduct their whole lives can be seen ... as autonomous, and as evolving within its own terms, but it is quite unreal, ultimately, to separate this pattern from a precise political and economic system, which can extend its influence into the most unexpected regions of feeling and behaviour.¹⁷

Armed thus, with new charts, and in collaboration with a sociologist colleague, I began to reinterpret the available evidence. The cruder economic realities of early post-World War One New Zealand were not difficult to uncover. Parr, Massey, the various education boards, even the New Zealand Educational Institute now became so much less the frightened, misguided patriots; so much more the cynical manipulators of class consciousness through a school system designed to keep workers in their place. With the impending reintroduction of flag honouring regulations (1984), we felt able to assert that "During periods of economic recession, schools became major vehicles for the indoctrination of sets of patriotic ideologies, which promote the value of unity and loyalty in order to draw attention away from existing economic and social division".¹⁸ Prolonged economic recession during the twenties aggravated social and political divisions. Real wages in 1919 had fallen to their lowest since the turn of the century.¹⁹ Massey, quite apart from being a British Israelite, obsessed with crackpot theories about the imminent decline of British greatness due to moral laxity, also epitomised the worldly code of the New Zealand primary producer, in his assertion that; "The employer [could] not be prosperous without the cooperation of the worker".²⁰ The first post-war annual NZEI conference reflected political concern about youth susceptibility and the Institute's president, A. Erskine, warned that the greatest failing within the education system was its inability to draw out qualities that would enable the worker to find relief in other interests from the monotony that characterises Labour under modern conditions".²¹ With little dissent, the Conference passed a resolution calling for the school leaving age to be raised to 16, lest "...the masses...not be equipped to play their proper part in the industrial and commercial struggles of the world".²² A subsequent *National Education* editorial went so far as to suggest that education could make a valuable contribution towards discouraging the state of mind which saw "...'Red Labour' on one side and 'Big Money' on the other, and instead encourage the view that society was based on unity and cooperation".²³

This ideology of organicist harmony was, reflected in the 1919 history syllabus revision which gave explicit directions to teachers on how a lesson on colonial expansion, for instance, could be utilised as a basis for further instruction on the causes of British greatness; her strength, unity and harmony. Likewise, flag saluting, numerous school assemblies for Empire Day, Trafalgar Day and Anzac Day were excellent examples of what Hobsbawm termed 'invented tradition', with its ritual,

its evocative symbolism and almost feudal notion of duties and obligations.²⁴ It seemed common sense (once again) to postulate that in an increasingly grim post-war world, faced with a rising New Zealand proletarian consciousness, conservative politicians and conservative educationalists, became disciples of the new patriotism, with its heady doses of uncritical emotionalism. In this, they were joined by more than a few erstwhile liberals, who felt more comfortable defending the established order, given that much of the patriotic rhetoric borrowed heavily from the new insights into child psychology, then gaining ground. T. B. Strong, Chief Inspector of Primary Schools, for example, in the process of justifying flag saluting to teachers, stressed the plasticity of the child's mind, the high development of the capacity for self-sacrifice in the young. Quoting the Social Darwinianist, Benjamin Kidd, he went on to assert that "The extraordinary intensity of the emotion of the ideal in the mind of the child and the part this faculty plays in producing that capacity for sacrifice upon which civilisation rests, must always be kept in view".²⁵ Further evidence of the official respectability of patriotic ideology stemmed from its intellectual links with the intelligence testing movement. Researchers such as Thorndike, Goddard and Terman on occasion utilised similar phrases concerning the malleability of children, the importance of harmony in society and the necessity for hierarchy.²⁶

The above analysis provides a harsher though perhaps ultimately more useful conceptualisation of school patriotism. More important, it acknowledges that past events can no longer be dismissed as unfinished business, and patriotism simply consigned to obscurity. It permits a dialogue, of sorts, between the historian, the past and the present. Notwithstanding these advantages, however the analysis contains serious flaws and I would not subscribe to it today without significant modification.

A major shortcoming of the analysis is that it does not fit subsequent events. If, for instance, "there is a close relationship between the ideology of patriotism and economic recession",²⁷ then logically, school patriotism should have reached a new peak in 1929-1935, with the Great Depression. Yet exactly the opposite occurred. Patriotism and its role in school life became a subject for increasingly bitter debate.²⁸ Educationalists as a group became more zealous in their advocacy of increased internationalist teaching, and more critical of the possible effects of school patriotism. It is instructive to trace attitudinal changes throughout the *New Zealand School Journal*. In March 1919, a *School Journal* article on the Versailles conference laid heavy emphasis on the justice of the Allied cause and the corresponding wickedness of Germany.²⁹ Over the next five years numerous articles with a patriotic theme appeared in the *School Journal* which explored the underlying reasons for British superiority in Empire building, the greatness of the British race and the origins of the Union Jack, whilst others commemorated the War dead and praised the exploits of New Zealand soldiers. By the end of the decade, however, anti-war sentiment was becoming more noticeable and during the early 1930s, pacifism was a strong feature of several articles. Now, the real patriot was " ... he/Who knows no boundary, race or creed/Whose nation is humility/Whose dearest flag is brotherhood".³⁰ By contrast the real enemies of mankind were "...not aggressive foreign powers but ignorance, prejudice and disease".³¹

The development of internationalism as a reaction to earlier patriotic zeal in the primary schools militates against the wholesale acceptance of economic determinants. In addition, the utilisation of rather more sophisticated Neo-Marxist analyses would appear to offer more fruitful lines of enquiry. Central here, is the concept of hegemony as defined by Gramsci and refined by subsequent Neo-Marxist scholars. Viewed historically, hegemony is a process. It is therefore, dynamic and has been constantly defined, created and modified. Connell has attempted to illustrate the hegemonic process at work in an Australian context.³² In New Zealand less work is available, but specific studies within the Neo-Marxist tradition are of considerable value in applying theory to particular historical problems. Hill, for instance, examining film censorship, demonstrates the role of public opinion in changing concepts of censorship, whilst also pointing out that the decisions of the censors have continued to reflect the interests of the ruling class.³³

Applying Hill's conclusions to school patriotism during the 1920s, we can identify fairly readily, the growth of a crisis in public opinion. This is particularly evident as school syllabus and curriculum changes were superseded by coercion, in the form of regulations, legislation, trials and public enquiries. Erstwhile conservative provincial newspapers such as the *Waikato Times* and the *Manawatu Daily Times*, which had exhibited some concern over the activities of socialist booksellers and near hysteria over the revelations made during the Weitzel case, displayed patent unease over the imposition of loyalty oaths for teachers and were hostile to further controls on them.³⁴ Likewise, political opinion was changing and by 1927 Reform MPs themselves were sufficiently critical to block a proposed education amendment bill which would have given boards the right to fine teachers up to 10 pounds for various unspecified 'minor offences'.³⁵

Whilst coercive measures against teachers met increasing public resistance public concern over youth, in itself a strong feature of school patriotism, appears to have gradually subsided after 1930. Butcher's comment about the "...deplorable moral laxity of the present generation which attracted parliamentary criticism at the time, represented the swansong of this concern which, at its height in the 1920s reached considerable proportions".³⁶ The part that concern over youth morality played in sustaining the momentum of school patriotism during the early 1920s can be best illuminated through the utilisation of Cohen's theory of 'moral panic'. Of particular relevance here is the concept of 'the boundary crisis': According to Cohen, the boundary crisis is characterised by the dominant class attempting to more clearly establish moral boundaries during a period of moral and social uncertainty.³⁷ Accordingly, the patriotic overreaction of politicians and educational administrators in the early 1920's can be typified as reactions in terms of "...positions, status, interests, ideologies and values, rather than as undifferentiated acts of collective fear."³⁸ Obviously, there are difficulties with this interpretation also. From an evidential perspective we need to know, more about New Zealand youth during the 1920s, the various influences upon it and the reactions to the youth 'problem' as it was perceived by society. Furthermore, the utilisation of critical social theory to explain patriotic zeal must allow that not every education board member, Reform Party politician or magistrate acted like a component in an ideological blueprint. T. Forsyth, Chairman of the Wellington Education Board during the early 1920s is a case in point. Forsyth was soon to enter politics as the Government member for Wellington East, yet he not only firmly resisted what the *Maoriland Worker* contemptuously described as jingoist sentiment on the part of several board members but also stood up to the redoubtable R. A. Wright, a senior Reform Party spokesman and future minister of education. In the course of defending the rights of teachers accused of disloyalty, Forsyth concluded that "... political captial [was] being made and he for one [was] not going to allow the Board to be made a 'stalkinghorse'".³⁹ Similar comments can be made of several erstwhile conservative administrators and it should also be pointed out that the still powerful Liberal Party was for the most part against the imposition of loyalty oaths.

Notwithstanding these minority actions however, the notion of 'moral panic' is a useful one, because it permits questions to be asked about the nature of the educational decision-making process, and its interplay with 'public pressure'. To some extent, it also focuses on the changing ideology of the decision-makers. It seems possible that the change of heart among the majority of educational decision-makers concerning school patriotism from the end of the twenties reflects the influence of a new generation of reformers, with rather different views about citizenship and coercion. Further utilisation of critical theory may provide crucial insights into this movement and its consequences. Gouldner in another context, has described the rise of the British 'new' middle-class of intellectuals and technocrats, along with that class's distinctive ideology.⁴⁰ In New Zealand, Meuli, utilising the work of the American. C. Wright-Mills, has examined the rise of the New middle-class over the 1896-1926 period. He concludes that "Social pressures of modern urban existence required that schools produce well adjusted and socially aware young citizens, as well as useful and reliable employees".⁴¹ Despite a superficial liberalism, educational progressivism endorsed these values. It should be possible to trace the rise of liberal progressivist influence within the New Zealand education system, from relative obscurity in the early 1920s, to respectability, and then,

after World War Two, to orthodoxy as Selleck has done in Australia.⁴² Certainly educational progressives in New Zealand came to believe they had won a victory of sorts. In 1957, for instance, F. C. Lopdell, looking back on a long career, justifiably claimed that "...in the twenties...education began to set itself the wider objective of developing the whole person for life in a democracy...".⁴³

The careers of both Lopdell himself and of F. L. Combs illustrate this process.⁴⁴ The inter-war period witnessed an upsurge in domestic progressivist writing.⁴⁵ Progressives were reaching positions of responsibility in the New Zealand education system during the 1930s and, by and large, they disliked school patriotism, with its overt indoctrination through the history syllabus and its blatant coercion of teachers and pupils. For them, social studies was to offer a much more acceptable and more effective vehicle for proselytization.⁴⁶ To use Gouldner's terminology, senior teachers and curriculum designers were, as members of the new middle-class, busily engaged in producing their own culture of critical discourse. This evolved set of values, scientific, organicist and internationalist in rhetoric, displaced the coercive structure of school patriotism. It is precisely these values that are reflected so clearly in the *School Journal* during the 1929-1934 period. Likewise, it was the adoption of these values that lay behind the anti-war activism of the Institute over the same period. It seems apparent that the decline of school patriotism was also hastened by the movement of the new middle-class into the administrative and bureaucratic infrastructure of education. The support of this infrastructure was vital to school patriotism.

A recent example provides an apt illustration. In 1984, the Minister of Education, M. Wellington, was unable to gain significant support from teachers or from the educational bureaucracy for flag-honouring regulations, despite having the backing of caucus. That educational circles commonly regarded flag-honouring as unnecessary and even as 'irrational', may well have foredoomed the measure even without the change of government.⁴⁷ As far as the inter-war educational infrastructure is concerned, a clear illustration of the respective outcomes of 'control-maintenance' and 'control-loss' for school patriotism is provided by two incidents, 13 years apart. Each involved the Navy league, an organisation which often enjoyed liberal terms of entry into schools for the purpose of fostering naval awareness.

In October 1921, the Navy League was refused entry to three city schools controlled by the Auckland City Schools' Committee on the grounds that the league encouraged "...the fostering of the military spirit" among children. This was the first time in which an educational body had publicly refused the League and almost immediately the isolated Committee faced formidable pressure. Other school committees were quick to acknowledge their own support for Navy League activity. An editorial in the New Zealand Herald attacked the committee's decision. The Auckland education board expressed its concern, the Department was informed, and finally, following the receipt of a letter from Massey, the committee capitulated. At a time when patriotic zeal was at its height, the educational infrastructure had rallied behind the Navy League and dissent was crushed.⁴⁸

In May 1934, however, with school patriotism under considerable attack in the wider community, these roles were reversed, and the League was made acutely aware that times had changed. On this occasion, under the Navy League's auspices, Rear Admiral Burges Watson, R.N., Commander of the New Zealand Division, had warned the assembled pupils of several Wellington schools of the impending Japanese threat. Now, by contrast, there was no friendly infrastructure. Instead there were immediate protests concerning the Admiral's remarks from various educational bodies, including the Wellington School committee and Education Federation, and the Institute. In the House of Representatives the Navy League had to endure strong criticism from the Labour Opposition, while the government remained pointedly silent on the issue.⁴⁹

All this is not to say that social control in schools had ceased or even that patriotism itself did not remain an integral part of the education system. Rather, they assumed different forms and an important indication of this process lies elsewhere in the school curriculum. While school patriotism and its history vehicle were unable to accommodate themselves to decisive changes in society and education, moral instruction displays an evolutionary continuity. In 1919, the moral instruction

Syllabus (Senior Division), contained references to 'behaviour in public places', obedience, order (the value of system, punctuality and promptness), moral courage (including the 'heroism' of common life) and industry (the dignity of honest labour, especially manual labour).⁵⁰ The 1929 syllabus softened these strictures by subordinating them under general headings and concepts: Improvements in social welfare (English and Norman serfs, labourers in the Middle Ages, the Industrial Revolution, childworkers in modern times, how the worker is safeguarded today). In addition, there were topics such as 'the History of Useful Inventions', 'the Growth of the British Constitution' and 'Citizenship' (elections, churches, rights of citizens, elementary ideas regarding free trade and protection).⁵¹ By contrast, the 1929 history prescription attempted, unconvincingly, to juxtapose both 'old' patriotism and 'new' internationalism.⁵²

Unhampered by such philosophical problems, moral instruction was well on the way to becoming part of post-war social studies, with its quasi-scientific platitudes of cooperation, social justice and social concern. Where I wrote optimistically in 1980, that "the second post-war world would be shaped around an altogether different ideal, I would now add in 1986, the somewhat more pessimistic proviso, that this 'ideal' corresponds rather well with the cultural process described by Willis, which is aimed at producing" ... a less skilled work force, open to greater systemisation and higher working pace, coupled with a degree of flexibility to allow interchange between increasingly standardised processes".⁵³ The intervening years have made cynics of us all.

The utilisation of critical theory is very satisfying for historical specialists. It makes them relevant.

School patriotism in particular can be viewed as having significant and ongoing causes, rather than as an accidental phenomenon, best forgotten except when we are engaging in a little maudlin masochism. Critical theory reveals that the decline of school patriotism was relative. Its fall from official favour did not herald dramatic changes for pupils. It should also be noted that some of the regulations and legislation that structure school patriotism during the interwar years were to remain firmly in place despite apparently changed attitudes within the system.⁵⁴ Teachers too experienced little dramatic change. Social controls on teacher behaviour inside and outside the classroom remained strong and few teachers could afford to ignore them.⁵⁵

Critical theory, therefore, can be of considerable value in reinterpreting school patriotism during the interwar period. There are, however, some cautions to be noted. One concerns the type of evidence selected as significant. Education history in New Zealand has traditionally overemphasised the 'official' face of education at the expense of what one might term 'actuality'. Revisionist historians have, to a large extent, perpetuated this bias. At least one writer, drawing heavily on the *School Journal* for much of his material has alleged that prior to 1930 "...a whole generation at least received an ideological indoctrination which is supposed to be characteristic of totalitarian regimes".⁵⁶ McKenzie has aptly warned that the "...process of learning and teaching must...be one which is allowed to be not only unique in events, but also to have outcomes that might act in a countervailing manner to policies which seek to influence the school from external sources".⁵⁷ A more specific problem is the weighting education historians give to certain pieces of evidence. For instance in order to illustrate official zeal in inculcating patriotism to 'occasionally reluctant children and their families I once noted the *Maoriland Worker's* contention that a girl had been, 'flogged' for refusing to sing *Three Cheers for the Red, White and Blue* at school. Such evidence, whilst otherwise significant, remains contentious without collaboration from other sources. In this particular case a National Education editorial was to castigate the *Maoriland Worker* report as "...either a deliberate fabrication or a gross distortion of some trifling incident".⁵⁸ Whom do we believe?

We also need to caution ourselves against accepting the influence of school patriotism on New Zealand children at face value. The teaching-learning environment was often poor in New Zealand schools during the 1920s. Casualties among male teachers in World War One had been high. To this can be added the high failure rate among candidates for the qualifying examination to enter training college during the early post-World War One years.⁵⁹ Much of the available teacher training

force was ill-trained, and in 1922 it was claimed that 47% of all certificated teachers possessed inadequate 'D' or 'E' certificates.⁶⁰ Unreceptive children compounded these weaknesses. Many school children during the 1920s suffered from ill-health or were overtired. At the end of the decade, Dr J. Renfrew White's revelations on school children's health revealed the tip of a very considerable iceberg.⁶¹ In rural areas, many children attended school only after arduous farm labour and in 1920, the chief medical officer, G. H. Williams said, "It has been humorously suggested that in some schools it would be a kindness to provide dormitories rather than classrooms".⁶²

In addition to this, school patriotism as it was frequently taught, possessed conceptual difficulties. In 1920, the Auckland inspectors complained that history and civics were among the worst taught subjects, because many of the teachers lacked the subject knowledge necessary "... to make a strong and helpful appeal to the child's mind".⁶³ Little was known about the various stages of children's mental development and few concessions were made by teachers. In 1931, H. V. Clarke tested the moral concepts of 4,293 children from 17 Wellington secondary schools and discovered that far more children knew what was 'wrong', than what was 'right' for them, as individuals and future citizens.⁶⁴ Extrapolating from more recent studies,⁶⁵ one can conclude that patriotic concepts, steeped in feudal symbolism and remote allusions to past events, probably fared even worse, despite Strong's conviction that the child could be 'won over' through emotional appeal. To illustrate the point more graphically, the girl chosen to recite aloud at a patriotic assembly that "Kind hearts are more than coronets/and simple faith than Norman blood", probably entertained only the vaguest notions of what the phrase meant.⁶⁶ Added to these difficulties, was the fact that, at a time when examinable subjects counted for most in the eyes of parents, children and inspectors patriotism and indeed history and civics also, were not examinable.⁶⁷

Finally there is, for researchers seeking to apply critical theory, a problem directly related to the persistent generality of the historiographical debate. In New Zealand McKenzie has warned that "... ideologies do not of themselves make good history".⁶⁸ As a corrective to simplistic sociological studies where "... history has been leached out in the preoccupation with sociology...",⁶⁹ this is sound enough advice. In Australia a more intense debate has seen Partington go much further in asserting that some recent studies assume "... that the ruling ideas of the ruling classes spread everywhere in every nook and cranny...".⁷⁰ Again, this seems merely common sense, but it should be noted that in the course of attempting to reinterpret a topic such as school patriotism, it is deceptively easy to find evidence apparently supportive of such rebuttals.

Those responsible for educational decisions in New Zealand certainly, were never in total agreement about patriotism. Even those who were did not exercise their influence for long. Massey died in 1924. Parr was succeeded as Minister of Education by R. A. Wright. Even during the early 1920s the promulgation of patriotism in schools was the subject of debate, among those who supported it. In particular there was an early cleavage between those who wished to foster patriotism through established channels such as school history and those who desired to go much further through compulsion and legislation. The former position was probably held by the bulk of professional educators, while the latter was more commonly supported by senior bureaucrats and most (but not all) government MPs. Arguably, the failure of these two groups to achieve reconciliation, weakened the impact of school patriotism from the outset. Furthermore, to regard the message of school patriotism as all-pervasive, is to neglect other, counter-acting forces. As J. Donald Wilson points out with respect to Canadian education history, "the dialogue was not just one way as most social control theorists imply".⁷¹ Organised religion, for instance, could be, and was utilised to defend the legitimate order of society. In March 1921, for instance, the Reverend F. W. Young delivered a sermon at the All Saints Church in Ponsonby, Auckland, in which he warned the congregation that "there are some among us who preach no flag, no country, no God".⁷² On the other hand, the well-known Ormond Burton, together with several colleagues, attracted both publicity and considerable community support by refusing to take the oath of loyalty required of teachers.

Ultimately, however, counter-revisionism of the confrontational variety may well prove unfruitful for education history in New Zealand. For one thing, there is little real acknowledgement of more sophisticated notions of contestation. Thus the above examples may well count against the ready acceptance of crude reductionism, but they can legitimately be cited as illustrations of a continuing struggle over education between various groups. A rather better approach is surely to ask whether these incidents produced anything significant in terms of the rights of teachers and pupils within the education system. In reinterpreting our material we also need to consider the types of searching questions asked by Dow, in the course of criticising much recent Australian education history.⁷³ When Millar argues that, given low levels of industrialisation and local industry in pre-World War Two South Australia, emphasis was placed in the schools on teaching children an ideal of citizenship which included imperial unity, the folly and divisiveness of class consciousness and the virtues of thrift,⁷⁴ my response in reinterpreting New Zealand school patriotism in a similar period is to look beyond the changing nature of official rhetoric and beyond the bitter conflicts over legislation, to ask questions about the nature of the social groupings responsible for educational decisions, the composition of those who contested them, and the varying expectations these groupings had of children. In attempting these tasks, of course, it might well be found that 'the answers' to the problem of reinterpreting school patriotism lie not in applying doses of critical theory to a field already well prepared (the manure approach) but in the non-traditional topics suggested by Donald Wilson: social policy areas related to children, influences outside the school such as comics and films, and the reaction of adults to those media forms.⁷⁵

Notes

1. R. Openshaw, "Patriotism and the New Zealand Primary School: The Decisive Years of the Twenties". Unpublished D. Phil. dissertation, University of Waikato, 1978, p. 230.
2. L. Gordon and R. Openshaw, "The Social Significance of Flag-raising in Schools", *Delta* 34 (July 1984): 55.
3. R. Openshaw, "Decision at Waihi", *NZJES*, Vol. 19 (November 1984): 150.
4. *NZPD*, 183, 1918, pp. 186-187.
5. *NZPD*, 187, 1920, p. 356.
6. *National Education*, 1919, Vol. 1., No. 1., Editorial.
7. *AJHR*, 1920, E-2, (Appendix B), p. iv.
8. *AJHR*, 1922, E-1, p. 3.
9. See R. Openshaw, "The Highest Expression of Devotion: New Zealand Primary Schools and Patriotic Zeal during the Early 1920's", *History of Education*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (1980): 333-344.
10. See J. L. Ewing, *The Development of the New Zealand Primary School Curriculum 1877-1970* Wellington: NZCER, 1970, pp. 164-165.
11. R. Openshaw, "Patriotism in the New Zealand Primary School". See also, R. Openshaw, "Patriotism and New Zealand Primary Schools During a Decade of Change", in Clark, M. (ed.), *The Politics of Education in New Zealand*, Wellington: NZCER, 1981, pp. 103-121.
12. *New Zealand Chambers of Commerce, Economic Education Programme – How it Works*, Foldover pamphlet, Wellington, c. 1978.
13. See R. Openshaw, "'A Spirit of Bolshevism': The Weitzel Case of 1921 and its impact on the New Zealand Educational System", *Political Science*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (December 1981): 127-139.
14. R. K. Murray, *Red Scare. A Study in National Hysteria*, New York: McGraw Hill, 1964, Preface, pp. ix-xii.
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60. *AJI IR*, 1923, E-1, p. 19.
61. See *Otago Daily Times*, 7 July 1928, for instance.
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