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## BOOKS

# A CENTURY OF EDUCATION

**EDUCATING NEW ZEALAND.**  
By A. E. Campbell. Centennial Surveys issued by the Department of Internal Affairs. Printed by Whitcombe and Tombs.

(Reviewed by H. C. D. SOMERSET)

A SYSTEM of education in line with the best thought on the subject, lively enough to keep pace with the growing needs of the community, and at the same time capable of giving to everyone the means of enjoying a life of creative activity, is one of the essentials of democracy generally conceded but seldom understood. The breakdown of democracy in Europe in recent years has called for a re-valuation of principles; and systems of education have been subjected to a considerable amount of criticism—most of it misinformed. In view of these facts the Centennial survey, *Educating New Zealand*, is most timely in its appearance. The book was begun by Dr. C. E. Beeby, who decided to relinquish the task through pressure of work after he was appointed Director of Education. A. E. Campbell, who took



Spencer Digby photograph  
A. E. CAMPBELL  
"... Original contribution to social history"

over the book before the first chapter was completed, has succeeded in telling, in the short space of less than 200 pages, the essential story of education in New Zealand.

### "A Happy Choice"

It was a happy choice that gave A. E. Campbell charge of this work. A teacher himself, and son of a teacher, he has lived in an atmosphere charged with the problems of education. Since graduating from Victoria College and Wellington Training College he has successively taught in schools, edited *National Education*, and has held the post of University Lecturer in Education. In 1939 he was appointed to his present position as Director of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

The book gives a clear picture of the main features of education in this country; but it does a great deal more. It would have been all too easy to write something of a guide-book to education with eulogistic passages befitting a Centennial. Far from doing this, however, Mr. Campbell has made for us an original contribution to social history by relating the story of the schools to the larger story of New Zealand colonisation. The book has a clear-cut thesis which may be expressed briefly as follows. Upon the infant settlement—itsself a product of nineteenth century industrialism—operated two forces, one historical and the other geographical. The geography of the new land dictated new methods of work, so the colonist became adaptable and welcomed change. With new ways of work, however, went a nostalgia for the customs of the land which set its stamp on social life and profoundly affected our educational system. Let me quote from the first chapter: "... the historical principle of maintaining cultural continuity played a greater part in forming the educational system in New Zealand than did the geographical principle of adaptation to a new environment."

### English and Scottish Influence

The book is an essay on this theme. The author shows how our system of education was influenced by the English and Scottish systems—both of them

academic in outlook. Writing of the eighteen nineties he says, "You have a country just emerging from the pioneering stage, a country proud of its practicality and adaptability, a country already describing itself as 'The social laboratory of the world.' Its education, you may think, will be close to the concrete, absorbed in the present, rather boyishly experimental. What you find is just the reverse: practical classes for young adolescents are relatively few and have been established in the face of general opposition and indifference, while the great bulk of the secondary school population are engaged—and, it is widely believed, very properly engaged—in attempting to master chilly intellectual abstractions." He shows this principle at work in primary and secondary schools and in the University; he pays a tribute to George Hogben who became Inspector General of Schools in 1899 and initiated a new era by his liberal syllabus of instruction of 1904 no less than by his creation of the Technical School, so ably developed by La Trobe and Howell. The Technical School and some few experiments in adult education constitute the main developments of the system that are peculiarly our own.

Mr. Campbell's style is crystal-clear throughout, and the book is filled with passages of rare critical insight. It is an essay in educational thought and does not pretend to be exhaustive in treatment; but it shows in no uncertain way whence our educational ideas came and the direction in which we are moving. It should be read by every parent in New Zealand, every teacher, school-committeeman and Member of Parliament.

To the Editor,

Sir,—I was surprised to hear a reviewer of Mr. A. E. Campbell's book, *Educating New Zealand*, say from 22B the other Sunday night:

1. That the people of Otago were reluctant to provide education for their children, and that as late as 1876 half of the children got no education at all because their parents could not afford the high fees demanded by private schools.

2. That Mr. J. H. Howell came from England to take charge of the Christchurch Technical College.

3. That those who want to know what is being done at Rangiora High School should read *Littledene*.

As I have not read Mr. Campbell's book I don't know what he says on these points, but I should be astonished to know that he would support any of those statements, though they were given out as from him. —P.H.G. (Petone).

(Mr. Campbell makes this reply: "The first statement is one I could certainly not support as it contains several errors of fact. The book has many references to the educational achievements of the Otago Scots, though I have noted that Otago adhered very rigidly to the principle of school fees with the result that children of parents who were unwilling or unable to pay fees were deprived of schooling. The second statement, as your correspondent suggests, is incorrect, but here I am at fault. Before going to Christchurch Mr. Howell was for several years science master at the Auckland Grammar School. The third statement was, of course, a slip on the part of the reviewer, who confused H. C. D. Somerset's *Littledene* with J. E. Strachan's *The School Looks at Life*.)

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