

figures show that enormous numbers of Canadians are illiterate despite having been to school; this suggests that the system is not even capable of reaching goals much more limited than those it promises to reach. Since the system, as it functions at present, does not ensure social progress and efficiency, there is little argument for its continuation in its present form. Neither the exclusion of people with mental handicaps from neighbourhood schools, nor the assumption that individual capacity determines how well a student performs lead to the promised efficiency and social order.

Ability Equals Equality

The fourth myth follows from the acceptance of the third. In this case, people have been convinced that the existing education system ensures equality because it is based on the objective criteria of ability. A notion of equality founded on a belief in meritocracy is based not on some set of human characteristics or human attributes but on a certain narrowly defined and measurable set of abilities that contribute to the present social and economic order. In this way it is argued that the economic and social distributions in society are a reflection of biological capacity. In other words, it is fair that some people have more and some people have less in society because it simply reflects what they contribute to society. Therefore, political inequality can be attributed to biological characteristics that are reflected in intellectual ability which is determined during the education process. A person is equal to others to the extent that she or he has the ability to compete in spheres deemed to be important to social and economic progress.

The reality, as opposed to the myth, is that the education system is not structured, as it claims, to provide people with an education, or even to equalize their opportunities and strengthen their abilities. Instead, it is structured to provide a justifiable, formal means of filtering out people who will then be denied all social benefits. If, on the other hand, there was