The Writing of British Columbia History

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I

Few collections of historical literature demonstrate more clearly than the work produced by British Columbia's historians the truth of the proposition that the historian's vision of the past results from a complex process of interaction involving his own intelligence, the changing character of the reality he contemplates and the conceptual lens through which he views it. Each of the three main divisions into which historical writing about British Columbia falls must, in consequence, be defined not only in terms of the structure given it by the varying phenomena of which the historians producing it found it necessary to take account but also by the manner in which their sense of what formed an appropriate subject of investigation was shaped by the changing framework of assumption, hypothesis and value within whose confines they operated. What follows, then, at once records the shifting picture of the British Columbia past painted by its historians and attempts to explain how that picture acquired the balance and composition that set it apart. In so doing — the point should be made clear at the outset — it makes no attempt to examine exhaustively the body of historical writing dealing with British Columbia but concentrates instead on work which seeks to make a comprehensive statement about its subject or contributes importantly to the articulation of a significant point of view about that subject.1

II

The first generation of British Columbia's historians approached their task through the agency of conceptual tools drawn directly from the values and experience of bourgeois Victorians. Human activity, they believed,

¹ For a good general bibliography of B.C. history, see H. K. Ralston, "Select Bibliography on the History of British Columbia," in J. Friesen and H. K. Ralston, eds., *Historical Essays on British Columbia* (Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1976), pp. 281-93. For an excellent discussion of the work of some of the province's leading historians, see J. Friesen, "Introduction," in *ibid.*, pp. vii-xxv.

was to be judged in terms of the extent to which it released the wealth of the world, created moral communities and illustrated the truth that the individual was the master of his fate. In British societies, moreover, such activity had also to stand up under the scrutiny of those who sought to satisfy themselves that the interests of an entity of worldwide scope were being served.

On all of these counts the shape and content of the British Columbia experience did more than meet the test, for nothing seemed clearer than that the province was a place of wealth and splendour whose inhabitants were daily advancing themselves and their community down the road to development, the fulfillment of its imperial responsibilities, and moral perfection.

It helped, of course, that the province's inhabitants had been given much with which to work. The generation of British Columbia's historians active from the 1880s to World War I was, in fact, struck more forcibly by the abundance of its material resources than by any other single factor in its character. Extravagantly endowed with land and fisheries,2 in possession of vast mineral and timber reserves,3 it seemed truly a land of plenty.4 One could, indeed, hardly exaggerate its potential. It comprised, noted two early students of its past, "an empire equal in area to a third of Europe, and, though still in a state of savage nature, rich beyond measure in political and industrial possibilities." Even reference to the immense difficulties geography had placed in the way of realizing that potential the work, noted provincial librarian and archivist E. O. S. Scholefield, was "herculean" in its proportions — served only to magnify the already considerable scope of what was being accomplished. As Scholefield himself insisted, the province's "progress within the fifty years succeeding the fur-trading era is the most remarkable in history." Taking their cue from

² Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of British Columbia* 1872-1887 (San Francisco, 1887), pp. 743-48.

³ R. E. Gosnell, A History of British Columbia ([Vancouver?], 1906), pp. 273, 289.

⁴ The maker of these remarks was D. W. Higgins, one-time editor of the Victoria Colonist and a former speaker of the B.C. Legislature, who contributed pp. 110-45 to R. E. Gosnell, A History of British Columbia ([Vancouver?], 1906). For the comments referred to here, see p. 122.

⁵ Robert Hamilton Coats and R. E. Gosnell, Sir James Douglas (Toronto, 1909), p. 94.

⁶ E. O. S. Scholefield, "Part One," in E. O. S. Scholefield and R. E. Gosnell, A History of British Columbia (Vancouver and Victoria, 1913), p. 156. "No other part of Canada," Scholefield emphasized, "had so much to contend with in this particular as had the Colony of British Columbia." p. 187.

⁷ Ibid., p. 67.

this stupendous fact, moving forward to consider what lay in front of them, the province's historians advanced as one man to follow the lead given by Ontario immigrant and popular historian Alexander Begg in his efforts "to place on record... the rise and progress of British Columbia from its earliest discovery to the present..."

There was, inevitably, disagreement concerning which events in the province's history were to be assigned special status in its march towards greatness. Some thought it had all begun with the discovery of gold; others took the view that the land-based fur trade precipitated the development of the colony; all, however, agreed that whatever the significance of these early events, the coming of the CPR had been decisive. More than any other that event had opened the way for unimagined growth and even the assumption by the province of a role of truly global significance. 11

If the province's material progress had been extraordinary, there was, its historians insisted, equally compelling evidence that what it had experienced in the field of moral improvement was no less worthy of note. The action of Douglas in dealing with the American miners of the gold rush period offered one clear indication that standards of morality and order prevailed, but those wishing to prove how civilized life in British Columbia was found no need to stop short after having cited that familiar example. Few commentators, in fact, hesitated to speak in sweeping and all-inclusive terms of the striking contrast they saw between peaceful and law-abiding British Columbia and the settlements to be found on the American frontier. "In British Columbia," reported R. E. Gosnell, the province's first provincial librarian and archivist, "towns of the coast society were leavened with an especially religious and moral element," 12

⁸ Alexander Begg, History of British Columbia From its Earliest Discovery to the Present Time (Toronto, 1894), p. 7.

⁹ Bancroft, op. cit., p. 758; Scholefield, op. cit., p. 153.

¹⁰ "The sailor," wrote Coats and Gosnell, "showed the way, but it was the overland traveller who entered and took possession." Coats and Gosnell, op. cit., pp. 49-50; see also ibid., pp. 79, 310-11.

[&]quot;The period from 1886 to 1892," noted D. W. Higgins, "was one of unexampled prosperity... throughout the province." Coats and Gosnell claimed that "the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway marks from many points of view the beginning of a new era in the development of British Columbia" and Gosnell himself argued in 1913 that "progress... since the CPR has been completed, has been rapid and during the last decade phenomenal." See Higgins, op. cit., p. 141, Coats and Gosnell, op. cit., p. 328, and R. E. Gosnell, "Part Two," in E. O. S. Scholefield and R. E. Gosnell, A History of British Columbia (Vancouver and Victoria, 1913), p. 3.

¹² Gosnell, op. cit., p. 7.

while, emphasized Scholefield, "even when Barkerville reached its high water mark of prosperity, the population was generally distinguished for its sobriety and orderliness." ¹³

Commentators, in fact, found a number of indications that life in British Columbia had attained a quality and perfection unmatched elsewhere. Schooling, noted Scholefield, "with all its softening and cultural influences"14 had early been introduced into the life of the province, a point that the American historian H. H. Bancroft emphasized in closing his volume with a lengthy chapter on "Settlements, Missions, and Education 1861-1866." Technology, too, had been instrumental in improving the quality of life. "Victoria city," noted Gosnell, "was one of the first cities in America to be lighted by electric lights," and the existence of its people had also been eased by trolley systems and hydroelectric power.¹⁶ Even coal mining in British Columbia had a purer and less debilitating character than was the case elsewhere. "Beautifully situated with bright skies [and] pure air . . . [Nanaimo]," Bancroft claimed, "presents little of that sooty, opaque appearance, either physical or moral, so common to the colliery villages of England."17 How, enthused Begg, could one doubt that in British Columbia there was much indeed to "delight the gaze of the enraptured visitor."18

This model society, insisted its historians, at once owed much to, and offered a nearly perfect environment for, the activities of the individual. While few commentators linked the themes of individualism and progress so explicitly as Gosnell and Scholefield — they entitled the sections of their history which contained biographical sketches of the province's great men "Sixty Years of Progress" — most were quite as concerned to make the point that the good society could have no real existence apart from the individuals who had shaped it. Captain Vancouver and Alexander Mackenzie, the voyageurs of fur trading days and the prospectors of the gold rush, the officials of the HBC and the businessmen at the end of the nineteenth century were alike portrayed as men embodying the classic virtues of will, initiative, character and pluck. Some, like Vancouver¹⁹

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13 Scholefield, "Part One," in Scholefield and Gosnell, op. cit., p. 174.
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¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

¹⁵ Bancroft, op. cit., pp. 707-39.

¹⁶ Gosnell, "Part Two," in Scholefield and Gosnell, op. cit., p. 178.

¹⁷ Bancroft, op. cit., p. 574.

¹⁸ Begg, op. cit., p. 7.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 50-51.

and Douglas,²⁰ were celebrated for having lifted themselves far above the common level; others, such as the voyageurs²¹ and the gold prospectors,²² exemplified an anonymous populist virtue; still others — the words are Gosnell's, describing Judge Matthew Begbie — were seen as "men who left strong finger marks on the history of British Columbia in the plastic day of its first growth."²³ In each case, the message was the same: much of what was valuable and important in the history of the province had been created by self-reliant and enterprising individuals. The British Columbia experience, as Gosnell put it, was "illustrative of a phase of Canadian individual enterprise that in recent years has evolved so many men of large affairs out of the rugged elements of Canadian life and produced so much wealth from the resources of a country rich in opportunity and rapid in development."²⁴

Important as it was, this emphasis on the individualist theme did not wholly supplant other ways of assessing the elements of provincial growth. Given the province's geography and early dependence on external markets and transportation links, it was, indeed, hardly possible to ignore the fact that what happened to the province and its people had much to do with circumstances beyond the control of any one individual. "Success," as Gosnell put it, "was in a general way dependent upon railway construction and communication with the outside world...." In making possible the development of the interior, allowing commercial contacts with the rest of the Dominion, and opening direct trade with the Orient and Australasia, this mode of development had done much to make possible the great work of the province's citizens.²⁵ Even as they wrote of the individual's power, commentators thus devoted no small degree of attention to at least one part of the context within which he and his community were working out their destiny.

The American Bancroft was, paradoxically, one of the most determined of this group of historians to insist on the reality and importance of British Columbia's association with Canada. The province's imperial orientation did not escape his notice, but he was equally anxious to stress the fact that "we must...consider [B.C.] as linked with her sister colonies, with

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20 Coats and Gosnell, op. cit., p. 353.
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²¹ Gosnell, op. cit., p. 39.

²² Bancroft, op. cit., p. 758; Gosnell, op. cit., pp. 100-01; Scholefield, "Part One," in Scholefield and Gosnell, op. cit., p. 178.

²³ Gosnell, op. cit., p. 94.

²⁴ Gosnell, "Part Two," in Scholefield and Gosnell, op. cit., p. 186n.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 13, 4.

Vancouver Island as one with herself, and with the Dominion of Canada...." Begg, very much concerned to introduce British Columbia to eastern Canadians, was similarly anxious to locate it in a Canadian context. The CPR, he conceded, might have an imperial dimension, but its construction had also made possible the "Union of East and West," a fact the meaning of which had been underscored by the visits of the Governor-General to British Columbia, all of which Begg chronicled in detail.²⁷

Other commentators were, however, less sure that the Canadian link was to be given pride of place. Mindful of the province's maritime origins, aware of the role played by the HBC in the formative years of its history, and much impressed by the fact of Britain's imperial power in their own day, it seemed to these observers that the province's relationship to Canada was to be conceived largely in terms of its provincial and imperial relevance. This did not mean that British Columbia's links with the Dominion were held to be of no importance: Gosnell and his collaborator in writing the life of James Douglas, for example, took the effective development of British Columbia to have begun with the commencement of Northwest Company activities on the Pacific Coast. They pointed out that Douglas had considered after 1859 that the province's population would be built up by settlement from Canada rather than Britain, and they reminded their readers that the westernmost part of the continent had played an important part in the development of North America as a whole.28 What received consistent emphasis was, nonetheless, British Columbia's isolation from what lay to the east. In terms both of its population and its external links, Scholefield insisted, mid-nineteenth century British Columbia was an imperial community completely lacking "any relations whatever with any other portion of British North America. . . . "29 Even after the eastern provinces joined together, the west coast remained isolated. "Geographically," noted Gosnell, "[it] was far removed from the seat of [Federal] Government. An almost insuperable barrier of mountains cut it off from the rest of the British possessions. . . . The country . . . was in every sense foreign to Canada."30 What was more, suggested onetime journalist and Speaker of the B.C. Legislature D. W. Higgins, the

²⁶ Bancroft, op. cit., pp. viii-ix.

²⁷ Begg, op. cit., pp. 457, 434-40, 509-45.

²⁸ Coats and Gosnell, op. cit., 56-57, 253-54, 2.

²⁹ Scholefield, "Part One," in Scholefield and Gosnell, op. cit., p. 179.

³⁰ Gosnell, op. cit., pp. 200-01.

feeling was mutual: the British Columbia delegates sent to Ottawa to negotiate terms were regarded "as visitors from one of the heavenly planets, who, having ventured too near the edge of their world, had missed their footing and, falling into space, had landed at the federal capital."31 This meant, insisted Gosnell, that union with Canada was in no sense a foregone conclusion. What produced it was, in fact, a quite rational calculation of provincial interest coupled with a strong sense that such a move had an important imperial relevance. It was, indeed, unlikely that in the absence of such a relevance, matters would have proceeded, for "throughout the length and breadth of the Empire there is no part where the people as a whole are so wholly and unreservedly devoted to the ideal of imperial unity and to British institutions as in British Columbia."32 This meant that matters affecting the province were to be assessed in terms of their impact on it as part of the empire. The CPR, certainly, was very much to be viewed as having an imperial rather than a merely national role to play. The driving of the last spike, asserted Coats and Gosnell, "was a grave moment in the history of Canada and the British Empire. . . . The gateway to the Orient had been opened at last by land."33 Even the Panama Canal was to be judged in terms of its capacity to allow British Columbia to move towards the assumption of a British-like status in world affairs. That remarkable engineering feat, predicted Gosnell, "will inevitably build up an industrial and mercantile Britain on the British Columbia coast, corresponding in all material respects to the Great Britain of many centuries old. . . . "34 British Columbia, its historians insisted, was thus very much an imperial rather than a Canadian province, firmly rooted in a larger world. Having, as Gosnell put it, "interests which are sui generis in a degree greater perhaps than is true of any other province of Canada," it had perforce to deepen its sense of its destiny, enlarge its understanding of the direction in which the unfolding of the historical process was taking it, and so avoid the dismal and pedestrian fate of becoming content with provincial status in a mere agglomeration of other and lesser jurisdictions.35

³¹ Higgins, op. cit., p. 123.

³² Gosnell, "Part Two," in Scholefield and Gosnell, op. cit., p. 5.

³³ Coats and Gosnell, op. cit., p. 326. See also Gosnell, "Part Two," in Scholefield and Gosnell, op. cit., p. 114.

³⁴ Gosnell, "Part Two," in Scholefield and Gosnell, op. cit., pp. 196-97. See also Gosnell, op. cit., pp. 295-96.

³⁵ Gosnell, "British Columbia and British International Relations," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, XLV, 1913, 2.

80

BC STUDIES

For all that they were concerned with painting the history of British Columbia in the brightest and most flattering colours, the early historians of the province were not entirely unaware that by the end of the nineteenth century the study of history had become a disciplined and critical undertaking. Begg, to be sure, was largely a compiler of other men's work, but Bancroft displayed a Rankean enthusiasm for original sources and the kind of truth that flowed from them, ³⁶ Gosnell was familiar with the germ theory of historical development and had some awareness of the relativity of historical judgment,³⁷ and both he and Scholefield were fully alive to the importance of documentary evidence.³⁸ It was, nonetheless, only after the Great War that historians of British Columbia developed an approach to their subject which, in moving them away from the special pleading on behalf of development, empire and self-made men which had characterized so much of the early work, showed that they were prepared to take matters of perspective, analysis and objectivity with due seriousness. What they wrote could hardly lose all trace of its ideological cast — as time passed it in fact more and more assumed the informal duty of rationalizing the claims of the regional interest groups that became steadily more prominent in both the economy and the government — but overall it acquired a noticeably more rigorous, disciplined and methodologically sophisticated quality.³⁹

- ³⁶ "The simple truth in plain language was all," he once wrote, "I aimed at, and if any doubted my judgment or questioned my inferences, there before the reader should be the sources of my information from which he might draw his own conclusions." Hubert Howe Bancroft, Retrospection: Political and Personal (New York, 1912), p. 324.
- ³⁷ Gosnell, "A Greater Britain on the Pacific," Westward Ho! Magazine, II(1), [January?] 1908, 8; Gosnell, "Prefatory," in Scholefield and Gosnell, op. cit., n.p.
- 38 "Many hundreds," reported their editor, "indeed thousands, of authorities and original sources of information represented in individual recollections, old manuscripts, diaries, official documents and state papers, magazines, newspapers, pamphlets and books were consulted." See "Editor's Foreword," Scholefield and Gosnell, op. cit., n.p.
- This shift was not equally clear in all quarters. F. W. Howay, one of the middle period's most prolific historians, continued to trade very largely in the intellectual commodities of the pre-war era. The Victorian certitudes which informed his major work, written in collaboration with Scholefield and published in 1914, were equally in evidence in what he produced in later years. He was particularly captivated by the myth of the self-made man. Cook, he would assert in 1928, was "the son of a day labourer... [who] by sheer industry and merit... rose rapidly," while David Thompson was also "a wonderful example of a self-made man." He continued, too, to believe that the province's history could best be written around the theme of progress, a fact underscored by the title of his 1930 contribution to the Cambridge History of the British Empire. Even University of British Columbia historian W. N. Sage, very much alive to new currents of thinking, did not wholly escape the influ-

The fact that growth and development were still basic realities in the province's life insured, of course, that they would continue to receive attention, a guarantee also offered by the prevailing conceptual wisdom, which, in emphasizing geographical determinants, made it virtually impossible to ignore the important role played in the shaping of the province's history by exploitation of its resources. None of this was, however, incompatible with the taking of a more rounded and analytical view of the province's economic history. On the contrary, the application of environmentalist concepts to the study of British Columbia's evolution reinforced the moves in the direction of adopting a more critical perspective which had been encouraged by society's maturing and the emergence of history as a university-based discipline. 40 These developments, moreover, were in their turn powerfully reinforced by the growth of a reformist critique of big business which in conjunction with the onset of the Great Depression stimulated the impulse to observe the province's growth from something other than a blandly approving point of view.41

ence of the old. His 1930 biography of Sir James Douglas showed him to be still very much impressed by the role the individual could play in the historical process—Douglas, he wrote, was "a great man, the greatest in the history of British Columbia" and had done much to shape its future—and as late as 1946 he was prepared to advance the proposition that the history of the province's largest city could be usefully approached in terms of the concept of progress. See E. O. S. Scholefield and F. H. Howay, British Columbia from the Earliest Times to the Present (4 vols., Vancouver, 1914); F. H. Howay, British Columbia: The Making of a Province (Toronto, 1928), pp. 15, 60; F. H. Howay, "The Settlement and Progress of British Columbia, 1871-1914," Cambridge History of the British Empire (vol. 6, Cambridge, 1930); Walter N. Sage, Sir James Douglas and British Columbia (Toronto, 1930), p. 347; and Walter N. Sage, "Vancouver—60 Years of Progress," British Columbia Journal of Commerce Yearbook, 1946 (Vancouver, 1946).

⁴⁰ What H. F. Angus had in mind when he suggested in 1929 that the time had come for historians and social scientists to consider in a close and detailed way the province's social and economic history, focusing, in particular, on the experience of representative communities in order to get a sense of the manner in which the community as a whole had developed. See H. F. Angus, "A Survey of Economic Problems Awaiting Investigation in British Columbia," Contributions to Canadian Economics, II, 1929, 47.

⁴¹ By the early 1940s Angus could dismiss the overweening concern with development which had been characteristic of British Columbia's businessmen at the turn of the century as the outcome of a "predatory psychology," while ten years after that Margaret Ormsby balanced what John Norris called her "hinterlander's" approval of development as something that brought "comfort, leisure, education, and civilization" against the fact that such development was often uneven in its impact, and, in consequence, productive of serious social and economic inequities. See F. W. Howay, W. N. Sage and H. F. Angus, British Columbia and the United States (Toronto and New Haven, 1942), p. 379 and John Norris, "Margaret Ormsby," in John Norris and Margaret Prang, eds., Personality and History in British Columbia: Essays in Honour of Margaret Ormsby (Victoria, 1977), p. 17.

Even, in consequence, as commentators continued to place emphasis on the ruggedness of the environment and the difficulties it put in the way of road and railway builders⁴² they focused attention on such technical details as the difficulties created for the timber industry by the immense size of British Columbia logs⁴³ and began the process of re-examining the province's early economic history, paying particular attention to the relative importance of the land-based and maritime fur trades.⁴⁴ Notwith-standing the persistence of familiar lines of argument — the University of British Columbia's W. N. Sage, for example, never really abandoned his judgment that "it was the production of gold in British Columbia which in the end determined the future of both colonies" — other elements in the province's economic life thus began to receive systematic consideration.

The single most important conceptual innovation in these years was undoubtedly that derived from the work of the staple theorists. Economist W. A. Carrothers' early work on the timber industry clearly betrayed the influence of the idea that B.C. development was best understood through the technique of relating it to the evolution of resource based industries, ⁴⁶ an approach he pursued in his examination of the fishing industry. ⁴⁷ The leading national exponents of staple theory also interested themselves in the structure of the B.C. economy. A. R. M. Lower included Carrothers' work on the B.C. forest industry in his *North American Assault on the Canadian Forest*, while H. A. Innis examined mining in the Kootenays, ⁴⁸ emphasized the links between the forest industry and the autonomist out-

- ⁴² Especially noticeable in such works as Noel Robinson, "Mining, Roads, and Development," in F. W. Howay, ed., Builders of the West: A Book of Heroes (Toronto, The Ryerson Press, 1929), pp. 218-31, but also to be seen in Howay, Sage and Angus, op. cit., p. 228.
- ⁴³ A theme developed by W. A. Carrothers, "Forest Industries of British Columbia," in A. R. M. Lower, *The North American Assault on the Canadian Forest* (Toronto and New Haven, 1938), p. 246, reference to which is also made in Howay, Sage and Angus, op. cit., p. 302.
- 44 In which work Howay took great interest. For a summary of his views, see F. W. Howay, British Columbia: The Making of a Province (Toronto, 1928), p. 90.
- 45 Sage, Sir James Douglas and British Columbia (Toronto, 1930), p. 237.
- 46 Carrothers, op. cit.
- ⁴⁷ W. A. Carrothers, *The British Columbia Fisheries* (Toronto, 1941). With a foreword by H. A. Innis. University of Toronto Political Economy Series No. 10.
- ⁴⁸ H. A. Innis, Settlement and the Mining Frontier (Toronto, 1936). Published in one volume with A. R. M. Lower, Settlement and the Forest Frontier in Eastern Canada (Toronto, 1936).

look of British Columbia,⁴⁹ and noted the particular character which its land-oriented, inshore nature had given the province's fishing industry.⁵⁰

In all of this work there was a clear concern not simply to emphasize the importance of staple production but also to provide a more fully articulated view of economic development than had previously been made available. At the same time that investigators provided gross accounts of production and growth, they also, therefore, tried to characterize the activity with which they were dealing. Carrothers, certainly, emphasized the peculiar technology terrain and size made it necessary for the forest industry to develop,⁵¹ while Margaret Ormsby's reminder that agricultural activity was firmly rooted in the province's economic history drew particular attention to the role played by both technological and institutional innovation in that field.⁵²

The more careful look at the province's economic life inspired by the economic and intellectual history of the interwar period not only resulted in a body of work that presented the province's history as the consequence of the exploitation of a series of staples; it also stimulated an attempt — never, regrettably, carried to fruition — to view the province's social and political life as a function of these activities. Innis himself, of course, played a key role in this process. His classic Fur Trade in Canada (Toronto, 1930) outlined the case for viewing geography and economics as the vital determinants of the political framework within which B.C. had come to operate, while in later work he drew attention to the manner in which the production of new staples had enhanced the strength of centrifugal forces in Canadian federalism, thereby strengthening autonomist tendencies in British Columbia as elsewhere.⁵³ Historians closer to home also made contributions in this area. In 1937 Sage suggested the existence of linkages between mining activity in the province and its

⁴⁹ H. A. Innis, "Editor's Preface," A. R. M. Lower, The North American Assault on the Canadian Forest (Toronto and New Haven, 1938), pp. vii-xviii.

⁵⁰ H. A. Innis, "Foreword," Carrothers, The British Columbia Fisheries, pp. v-xii.

⁵¹ Carrothers, "Forest Industries of British Columbia," p. 246.

⁵² "It was," she wrote, "in the field of specialized agriculture and experimentation in controlled marketing that British Columbia was to make its unique contribution to Canadian agriculture." See her "Agricultural Development in British Columbia," Agricultural History, XIX(1), January 1945, 11, and her "The History of Agriculture in British Columbia," Scientific Agriculture, XX(1), September 1939, 61-72, where these points are first outlined. For another commentator's view of the importance of agriculture in the province's development, see G. Neil Perry, "The Significance of Agricultural Development and Trade in the Economic Development of British Columbia," ibid., 73-86.

⁵³ Innis, "Editor's Preface," Lower, The North American Assault on the Canadian Forest, pp. vii-xviii.

peculiar outlook,⁵⁴ while by 1942 Judge F. W. Howay could emphasize the fur trade's preparation of the ground not only for settlement but for political division as well.⁵⁵

More far-reaching in its impact on the writing of the province's historians — in fact a fundamental component of it — was the attention paid to the matter of situating the province in its appropriate context. Concern with this issue was not, it need hardly be said, new, but where the first generation of historians had been led by its emphasis on steam technology and its sentiment for empire to emphasize the province's imperial orientation, the decline of the Empire coupled with the new investigators' concern with staples and markets led them to pay close attention to its regional character and its continental connections.⁵⁶ They had, indeed, already been pointed in this direction by their adoption of the frontierist modes of thought still fashionable in North American scholarly circles in the 1920s. Much influenced by H. E. Bolton and F. J. Turner, Sage noted in 1928 that "Canadians have not as a rule regarded their history from the North American point of view, still less from the standpoint of an historian of the Americas who sketches the evolution of the twin continents from the North Pole to Cape Horn."57 When, he continued, they did look at it from this vantage point they would discover that their history could not be separated from that of the continent as a whole. Particularly concerned to insist on the existence of a single North American frontier,58 Sage found his belief in its reality leading him to support

⁵⁴ W. N. Sage, "Geographical and Cultural Aspects of the Five Canadas," Canadian Historical Association Annual Report, 1937, p. 34.

⁵⁵ Howay, Sage and Angus, op. cit., p. 41.

⁵⁶ Their preoccupation with its imperial situation had not, of course, completely blinded the first generation of historians to the fact that the province had a continental dimension to its experience. Bancroft had seen it as part of the civilization of the Pacific slope, Okanagan historian J. A. MacKelvie had emphasized the manner in which its interior geography had linked it to the United States—"stretching from the Peace River to the Gulf of Mexico," he noted, "is a general succession of valleys and plains lying in a continental depression behind the coast range of mountains, and of this chain the Okanagan forms an important link"— and even Gosnell made it clear that he found geography to have tied B.C. closely to the continent as a whole. In the main, however, the realities of the age in which these figures lived combined with the conceptual tools in terms of which they operated to ensure that their attention would be focused elsewhere. See Bancroft, op. cit., MacKelvie, "The Development of the Okanagan," in Scholefield and Gosnell, op. cit., p. 211, and Gosnell, "British Columbia and the British International Relations," p. 3.

⁵⁷ W. N. Sage, "Some Aspects of the Frontier in Canadian History," Canadian Historical Association Annual Report, 1928, p. 62.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 63. In a 1940 reprint of this article, Sage stressed the interconnectedness of the two societies even more strongly. "This interlacing of the frontier," he wrote,

André Siegfried's view that the natural divisions of the continent ran north and south and that, in consequence, "each of the settled regions of Canada is more closely in touch with the adjoining portion of the United States than with the next region of Canada." The lesson to be extracted from this was clear — "If Canadian historians are to present in the future a more balanced picture it is essential that they should keep the whole development of the nation and of the five cultural regions more constantly before them" and Sage did not hesitate to apply it. In doing so he did not deny the importance of the orientation to the nation, to the Empire and to the Pacific, that history had given B.C., but he was even more anxious to underscore the fact that geography had made a contribution of its own: "The isolation of the province from the rest of Canada," he informed his readers, "is an essential fact. British Columbians are Canadians with a difference."

Utilizing this perspective, and hearkening back to the role markets and the structure of the economy played in the orientation of societies, political scientist H. F. Angus was led in 1942 to conclude that the province was, in fact, part of no single geographical or economic system. There had, it was true, been much economic involvement with the U.S., but the creation of political boundaries had created rival economies and so made it "quite wrong to consider the Pacific slope as constituting a single economic area." Equally, however, no integrated national economy had developed, for the 1920s had seen the province's export markets oriented

italicizing his words for emphasis, "is most important." See W. N. Sage, Canada From Sea to Sea (Toronto, 1940), p. 32.

⁵⁹ Sage, "Five Canadas," p. 28.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 34.

There were, he freely conceded in 1932, forces within British Columbia itself which had impelled the colony in the direction of union with the rest of British North America, and by 1945 he could advance the argument that the early years of the twentieth century had seen British Columbia—thanks largely to changes in the character of its population and the links provided by the CPR—integrated into the Dominion. The CPR, he wrote elsewhere—and here his emphasis on the imperial tie was clear—had in fact been not only "the iron link of Confederation" but also "of great strategic importance to the British Empire," while the Pacific, he continued, "is at [British Columbia's] door and the orient just beyond." See Walter N. Sage, "The Critical Period of British Columbia History, 1866-1871," Pacific Historical Review, I(4), [Autumn?] 1932, 424-43; Walter N. Sage, "British Columbia Becomes Canadian 1871-1901," Queen's Quarterly, LII(2), Summer 1945, 168-83; Walter N. Sage, "Five Canadas," 34. See also Walter N. Sage, "British Columbia," in George M. Wrong, Chester Martin and Walter N. Sage, The Story of Canada (Toronto, 1929), pp. 347, 351.

⁶² Sage, "Five Canadas," p. 33.

⁶³ Howay, Sage and Angus, op. cit., p. 380.

increasingly towards foreign buyers. "British Columbia's economic interests had," in consequence, "become independent of those of Canada." That the province had links in several quarters but was pointed clearly in none seemed clear to Canadian-born historian James T. Shotwell: "Although still separated from the East by over a thousand miles of prairie and a wilderness untamed except by the national railway system, British Columbia found in federal union with the provinces farther east, a safeguard for the essentially British character of its traditions and institutions. At the same time its contacts with the western states increased."

The uncertainty to which adoption of the regional-continental perspective had led was unwarranted to some — Innis had little patience with it⁶⁶ — but the difficulty of locating B.C. in the proper context remained. Even Margaret Ormsby's work demonstrated a degree of ambivalence on the matter. Very much committed to a fixed and unchanging view of the character of the province's internal life — she placed much emphasis on coast-interior rivalries, on the character of the valley communities, and on the shaping influence of Anglo-Irish and Canadian elements⁶⁷ — she resolved the larger problem of B.C.'s place in the world only with the passage of time. Preoccupied with purely regional concerns in the 1930s, war-time centralism, her sojourn in Ontario, and the influence of the

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 388.

⁶⁵ Shotwell, "Introduction," in ibid., p. vi.

⁶⁶ See his review of ibid., Canadian Historical Review, XXXV(3), September 1943, pp. 311-12.

⁶⁷ Ormsby's emphasis on the heterogeneous character of British Columbia society had been anticipated by Sage's remark that "Geographically there are six or seven British Columbia's... The centres of population are on the coast and many portions of the vast interior are exceedingly sparsely settled. The division of the province into coast and interior is vital. The older division of island versus mainland still exists..." Assessments of this kind were in fact common enough even in the writing of the first generation of historians, but Ormsby's special feeling for the interior communities allowed her to elaborate the point in an wholly unprecedented way. Her general history made frequent reference to the valleys and their people, and part of the strength of her Presidential Address to the Canadian Historical Association derived from the attention it gave the British Columbia character as a phenomenon rooted in the small communities of the province. Even her discussion of Susan Allison's life in British Columbia focused on the nature of life in the hinterland communities rather than the experience of pioneer women; here, too, as John Norris suggests, Ormsby was concerned to portray the Similkameen and Okanagan settlements Allison inhabited as "examples of the warm, intimate communities which provide the basic strength of a society in any era...." Sage, "Five Canadas," pp. 33-34; Ormsby, British Columbia: A History (Toronto, 1958), p. 440; Ormsby, "A Horizontal View," Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers, 1966, p. 11; Ormsby, A Pioneer Gentlewoman in British Columbia: The Recollections of Susan Allison (Vancouver, 1976); John Norris, "Margaret Ormsby," in John Norris and Margaret Prang, eds., Personality and History in British Columbia: Essays in Honour of Margaret Ormsby (Victoria, 1977), p. 26.

Rowell-Sirois approach to national issues moved her for a period in the direction of a centralist view of the nation's history and British Columbia's relation to it.⁶⁸ Once back in British Columbia, however, she returned to a more fully province-centred view of the region's relationship to the country at large.

Central to her later work — and in this her essential regionalism plainly revealed itself — was the conviction that functions vital to the life of the province were rooted in the province itself. "From this time on," suggests John Norris, "there is observable in her writings a growing emphasis on the importance of the province as the true centre of cultural and social function. The Canadian union was increasingly viewed as a permissive entity, allowing variation — ideally, a loose federation permitting unity in emergencies." As Ormsby herself put it in her 1966 Presidential Address to the Canadian Historical Association, "the fact of the matter was that in nation-building the nation would have to take much of its energy from tension. It would be desperately difficult to secure the articulation of regional economies and disparate cultural traditions."

This Sage-like emphasis on the fundamental importance of regionalism in Canada did not, however, imply a Sage-like continentalism. Where Sage sought to work against the victory of a narrow provincialism by emphasizing the province's continental situation, Ormsby moved towards the same end by drawing attention to its British and imperial character. As she argued as late as 1960, only if the region were viewed in this context could its nature be fully understood. "Above all," as she put it, "we need to put the colonies on the Pacific seaboard into the setting of empire, since, forgetting that they were merely part of a greater whole, we are still too much inclined to think of them as isolated political units." The province, to quote John Norris once more, was thus to be seen as "a British community whose provincialism is rooted in the large cosmopolitan civilization of a world-wide empire."

^{68 &}quot;Prime Minister Mackenzie, the Liberal Party, and the Bargain with British Columbia," Canadian Historical Review, XXVI(2), June 1945, 148-73; "Canada and the New British Columbia," Canadian Historical Association Annual Report, 1948, 74-85.

⁶⁹ Norris, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

⁷⁰ Ormsby, "A Horizontal View," p. 8.

⁷¹ Ormsby, "Neglected Aspects of British Columbia's History," British Columbia Library Quarterly, XXIII(4), April 1960, 10.

⁷² Norris, op. cit., p. 15.

While, then, the middle period had seen historians of British Columbia move away from the earlier emphasis on progress, development and individualism, it also — as Ormsby's call to remember the imperial dimension in the province's past made clear — witnessed an important degree of continuity. Ormsby's own work laid undiminishing emphasis on the British and imperial background, and economic development — albeit viewed through different spectacles than in the earlier period — remained very much in the forefront as well. Overall, however, the fact of change was in the air. The impact of environmentalist modes of thought had been considerable, and, as Ormsby's work — synthesized in her 1958 British Columbia: A History — itself made clear, much new light had been shed on the province's character and development by considering its internal geography, its location in space, and the rivalries of its people. It would, a double set of events in the life of the province insured, be this thrust in the direction of change which would be carried forward in the future.

IV

Just as the changing conceptual framework of British Columbia's historians after World War I had combined with alterations in the nature of the world in which they lived to displace the early emphasis on empire, progress and individualism in favour of a concern with geographical and economic determinants, so by the 1960s another conceptual shift and further changes in the nature of reality were moving the focus of investigation in yet another direction. The complex process, to speak concretely, by which North American historians discovered that society, possessed of its own structure and dynamic, could not be understood solely in terms of the impact on it of the primary environment, stimulated an unprecedented interest on the part of British Columbia historians in the British Columbia variant of that phenomenon.⁷³ At the same time the changed position of

⁷⁸ The conviction that society is a phenomenon possessing its own structure and dynamic and can usefully be approached carrying the tools of the social scientist did not, of course, impress itself on all North American historians with equal force. For a comment on its failure, in the early stages of its development in the U.S., to do so there, see A. S. Eisenstadt, "American History and Social Science," The Centennial Review, VII, Summer 1963, 255-72. In the next year, however, a group of American historians could co-operate in the writing of a volume intended to acquaint their colleagues in the field with the utility of this approach; by the early 1970s interest in it had grown to the point where, in Samuel P. Hays' view, there was as much of a need to insist on discipline and rigour in the field as there was to urge historians to enter it; and by 1977 the body of work in the history of American society, especially that of the colonial period, had begun to generate a critical literature of its own. See Edward N. Saveth, ed., American History and the

Indians and orientals in British Columbia society, the arrival of significant numbers of European immigrants and the clear emergence of a class-based politics created conditions which, in attracting attention to phenomena which could only be understood as components of society, invited the deployment of modes of analysis appropriate to their study.

Moves in the direction of dealing with themes in the history of society in British Columbia did not, of course, involve an absolute break with what had gone before. Even work which continued to concern itself with the familiar themes of development, growth and external links came, however, to possess a new cast. Not only did it offer a more nuanced look at such matters as investment patterns and the orientation of the economy—making the point that American involvement had not been so clearly dominant as had earlier been thought⁷⁴—it also drew on the concepts of urban historians such as Lampard and Warner to begin the process of anatomizing the British Columbia city, providing a picture of urban growth, and specifying the role in it played by the various groups involved.⁷⁵

For all, however, that changes in approach and emphasis could be

Social Sciences (New York, 1964); Samuel P. Hays, "A Systematic Social History," in G. Grob and G. Billias, eds., American History: Retrospect and Prospect (New York, 1971), pp. 315-66, and Richard Beeman, "The New Social History and the Search for 'Community' in Colonial America," American Quarterly, XXIX(4), Fall 1977, 422-43. Canadian historians, urged in 1965 to give attention to the history of society and more especially the class component in it, took up the task with a steadily growing enthusiasm. For S. R. Mealing's suggestion that this approach would be a profitable one, see his "The Concept of Social Class and the Interpretation of Canadian History," Canadian Historical Review, XLVI (3), September 1965, 201-18. For a survey of the work produced, see Carl Berger, "Social and Intellectual History," in J. L. Granatstein and Paul Stevens, ed., Canada Since 1867: A Bibliographical Guide (Toronto, 1974), pp. 75-86; Michael Cross, "Canadian History," in C. F. Klinck et al., eds., Literary History of Canada (Toronto 2nd ed., 1976), III, 63-83; and H. J. Hanham, "Canadian History in the 1970s," Canadian Historical Review, LVIII(1), March 1977, 2-22.

⁷⁴ H. K. Ralston, "Patterns of Trade and Investment on the Pacific Coast, 1867-1892: The Case of the British Columbia Salmon Canning Industry," BC Studies, 1, Winter 1968-1969, 37-45; Patricia E. Roy, "Direct Management From Abroad: The Formative Years of the British Columbia Electric Railway," in Glen Porter and Robert D. Cuff, eds., Enterprise and National Development: Essays in Canadian Business and Economic History (Toronto, 1973), pp. 101-21.

J. M. S. Careless, "The Lowe Brothers, 1852-1870: A Study in Business Relations on the North Pacific Coast," BC Studies, 2, Summer 1969, 1-18; the same author's "The Business Community in the Early Development of Victoria, British Columbia," in David S. Macmillan, ed., Canadian Business History: Selected Studies, 1497-1971 (Toronto, 1972), pp. 104-23; Norbert MacDonald, "Seattle, Vancouver, and the Klondike," Canadian Historical Review, XLIX(3), September 1968, 234-46; and the same author's "Population Growth and Change in Seattle and Vancouver, 1880-1960," Pacific Historical Review, XXXIX(3), October 1970, 297-321.

discerned in these areas, it remained true that the most dramatic evidence that new developments were occurring came in other fields. One of them had, indeed, long profited from the attention paid it by the social scientists. In making their extraordinarily fruitful investigations into the lives and culture of the Northwest Coast Indians the anthropologists had not, however, produced much that historians found worthwhile. Those commentators, sharing the perspective of the worthies whose exploits in civilizing the province they were recounting, were prevented by the world view in terms of which they operated from seeing the native population as anything other than a pitiful obstacle to progress and development, doomed to eclipse by the movement of history. When, therefore, the first generation of the province's historians did not ignore the Indian altogether it dealt with him in the accents — disgust, superiority, paternalist condescension — of the civilization whose accomplishments it was recounting.⁷⁶

As the movement of time made clear the magnitude of the European triumph over the native population and so diminished any sense that it was to be seen as a barrier on the path to progress, historians began to moderate their judgments. It became possible to view the native Indians first as an object of sympathy⁷⁷ and then, the passage of still more time having removed them yet further from the sight of the society from which the historian took his cue, to see them as an irrelevance which, having in relative terms hardly figured in the province's past, need scarcely be mentioned at all.⁷⁸ At length the wheel came full circle. The very fact that the Indian had almost disappeared from sight underscored the circumstance that his conquerors lived in a society founded on his displace-

Fegg, for example, saw the triumph of white civilization, however unfortunate for the Indians themselves, as at once inevitable and a sign of progress; Scholefield thought them "lawless savages" kept in hand by the "paternal solicitude" of the Hudson's Bay Company; and Coats and Gosnell found them an "inferior" and "docile" people who had lived no more than a "barren existence." See Begg, "The Native Tribes and Civilization," op. cit., pp. 115-19; Scholefield, "Part One," in Scholefield and Gosnell, op. cit., pp. 57, 85; and Coats and Gosnell, op. cit., p. 80. The one important exception to this general rule was the treatment given the Indians by Father A. G. Morice, whose anthropological interests coupled with his sojourn among the Indians allowed him to develop a degree of sympathy with their culture, value and institutions. See A. G. Morice, The History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia, 1660-1880 (Toronto, 1904).

⁷⁷ By 1928 Howay could concede that "the Indian had his own standards of morality," and by 1942 he found it possible to note "the finely balanced economic and social fabric" of tribal life. See Howay, British Columbia: The Making of a Province, p. 9; Howay, Sage and Angus, op. cit., p. 13.

⁷⁸ Ormsby's general history gave them scant attention, and her 1960 appeal for new work made no reference to them at all. Ormsby, British Columbia, and the same author's "Neglected Aspects."

ment. The emerging realization that this was so — in part stimulated, be it said, by a new militance on the part of the Indians themselves — led to a developing interest in the process which had produced so devastating a result. It was at this juncture that the relevance of work done in the social sciences finally commended itself to historians, disciplining their inquiry and suggesting — as the emergence of the field of ethnohistory had already made clear — that they need not seek to make amends for past neglect by indulging in a naive and guilt-ridden romanticization of the Indians' experience. Students of the British Columbia past, like students of North American history in general, thus found themselves taking a wholly new view of the Indian component of it.

This shift in perspective was simple but decisive. Once Indian societies began to be viewed as entities possessing societal integrity and coherence, the character of their relationship with the incoming Europeans assumed a much different aspect than it had been earlier thought to have. The components of Indian society were now seen to have formed a tough and cohesive whole which had been far from passive in its contacts with the Europeans. This was, to be sure, a point the burden of making which was still largely assumed by the anthropologists, 79 but by the 1960s there was clear evidence that historians had begun to take up the task. One of the most remarkable incidents in the history of contact in British Columbia could, in fact, be viewed by an historian of the Victorian world with quite remarkable results. William Duncan's success in building his model village at Metlakatla had, Jean Usher could insist, as much to do with the Tshimshians' own powers of adaptation and with Duncan's willingness to adjust his plans to meet their needs as it did with his determination and the power of the civilization he represented.80 That the native population had been anything but supine during much of the contact period was demonstrated with particular force by Robin Fisher. The Indians' response to the arrival of the whites was, Fisher argued, in no small measure to be understood "in terms of the priorities of their own culture."

⁷⁹ See, for example, Forrest LaViolette's The Struggle for Survival: Indian Cultures and the Protestant Ethic in British Columbia (Toronto, 1961, 1973), which makes the point that Indian concern to preserve the potlatch did not grow out of heathenish perversity but was the consequence of a desire to preserve a key element in a functioning social system, and Wilson Duff's The Indian History of British Columbia. Volume I. The Impact of the White Man (Victoria, 1965), which argues that Indian culture was capacious and elastic enough to absorb, at least for a time, innovations in technology, social organization and culture introduced by the whites.

⁸⁰ Jean Usher, "Duncan of Metlakatla: the Victorian Origins of a Model Indian Community," in W. L. Morton, ed., The Shield of Achilles: Aspects of Canada in the Victorian Age (Toronto, 1968), pp. 286-310; William Duncan of Metlakatla: A Victorian Missionary in British Columbia (Ottawa, 1974).

Before 1858, the year the fur trade ceased to be the dominant element in the province's economy and society, "Indians and Europeans shared a mutually beneficial economic system" in which the integrity of Indian civilization was not seriously affected; only after that year, with the advent of settlement, did the Indian lose his capacity to control in some measure what was happening to him.

If the Indian's changing relationship to white society played a part in preparing the way for a new view to be taken of him, broadly similar alterations in the oriental's position led to much the same result. So long as the Asian immigrant remained a largely alien presence in a society still very much in process of formation - a presence linked, moreover, to exotic civilizations with whom neither British Columbia nor Canada at large had significant contact — discussion of him aroused intense feelings. Most of those who commented on his life in British Columbia in fact found it impossible to avoid participating in the controversy to which that life had given rise. This was true of the early historians whose anxiety to support the building of a British society led them to approve the racial exclusivism they regularly noted, 82 it was true of Chinese historian Tienfang Cheng's plea for fair treatment for his compatriots, 83 it was true of Lower and Woodsworth's concern over the relationship a Japanese presence on Canada's west coast might bear to Japanese expansion,84 and it was true, thanks to their approval of restrictions on oriental immigration and their advocacy of a quota system, of the work of the first sociologists to investigate the problem.85

With, however, the defeat of Japan, the fact of war-time co-operation with China, and the ongoing acculturation of the Japanese in Canada,

⁸¹ Robin Fisher, Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia 1774-1890 (Vancouver, 1977), pp. xi, xiv.

⁸² Coats and Gosnell dealt with them in unflattering terms with a clear emphasis on steps taken to restrict Asian entry, while as late as 1928 Howay could refer to the Japanese as "wily little yellow men." See Coats and Gosnell, op. cit., pp. 336-37; Howay, British Columbia, p. 265.

^{83 &}quot;All intelligent people," he wrote, "are willing to admit that Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand have a perfect right to keep their country [sic] as white as possible; but it is highly desirable that they should always consider the honour and dignity of the Oriental nations, so that in excluding the orientals they will not create racial hatred and racial conflict in the future." Tien-fang Cheng, Oriental Immigration in Canada (Shanghai, 1931), p. 267.

⁸⁴ A. R. M. Lower, Canada and the Far East (New York, 1940), Charles J. Woodsworth, Canada and the Orient: A Study in International Relations (Toronto, 1941).

^{85 &}quot;Conclusion," in Charles H. Young and Helen R. Y. Reid, The Japanese Canadians (Toronto, 1938), pp. 171-93.

the revulsion against racism produced by Nazi excesses could act with the continuing work of the social scientists to produce conditions in which it was possible to take a less heated view of the Asian minorities in British Columbia. The results the adoption of such a perspective might yield had indeed been anticipated before the war in the fact that the 1933 study undertaken by sociologists Charles H. Young and Helen R. Y. Reid did not simply implicate its authors in the controversy by virtue of the policy recommendations it made, but actively sought to locate the roots of racism itself by drawing on conceptual tools — especially those dealing with the effects in multicultural societies of competition for status and subsistence — developed by Robert E. Park and others.

The key developments, however, came after 1945. Writing in the immediate post-war period, sociologist Forrest LaViolette showed how observers might begin to view white-oriental relations by the expedient of attempting at least for purposes of analysis to distance themselves from direct involvement in them. Conceding that "race prejudice most certainly does have an economic component," he nonetheless argued that "more than mere economic competition and its associated processes" were involved in the generation of anti-oriental feeling in British Columbia.86 A fuller explanation, he suggested, lay in the peculiar circumstances of the British Columbia community itself. There the problems of community building and integration always present in new societies were compounded by geographical isolation, concern about American expansionism, and a desire to remain British. These factors, joined to the relative absence of a creed which, in emphasizing individualism and citizenship, would have facilitated integration into the community of peoples of diverse backgrounds, ensured that highly visible and culturally distinct elements in the population would be perceived as posing a particularly sharp threat to the building of a unified community and so would become objects of discriminatory behaviour and policy.

By the 1970s a new generation of historians, contemplating the changed nature of the white-oriental relationship, inhabiting a climate of opinion which did not involve them in the old controversies about racism, and sensitized to the perspectives of the social scientists, were developing a genuine sympathy towards the idea that white-oriental relations could be best comprehended by employing a way of viewing behaviour which insisted that all facets of it — however strong the feelings of sympathy or revulsion they might arouse — were, in Durkheim's famous formulation,

⁸⁶ Forrest LaViolette, The Canadian Japanese and World War II: A Sociological and Psychological Account (Toronto, 1948), p. 283.

social facts, rooted in, and intelligible in terms of, a complex social whole to the comprehension of which a rigorously objective viewpoint was essential.⁸⁷ To be sure, Ken Adachi's account of the Japanese-Canadian experience,⁸⁸ for all that it provided a valuable insight into the factors inducing the Japanese-Canadians to accept their fate, remained essentially an indictment of white attitudes and policies, and in that sense did no more than Barry Broadfoot's popular account to grapple with the causes of racism.⁸⁹ Patricia Roy's sympathy with the more disciplined and critical approach of the social scientist was, however, clearly evident in her impatience with those who, preferring to see prejudice as the property of the perverse and wrong-headed, showed little disposition to understand its roots. She insisted, too, on the necessity of getting a sense of the time in which the events under study took place, and, no less importantly, on the need to go beyond simple economic explanations for anti-oriental feeling in favour of an insistence on the central role of the irrational.⁹⁰

Carrying forward LaViolette's emphasis on the role a concern to consolidate and integrate the community in support of a specific set of values and modes of behaviour had played in creating anti-oriental feeling, and insisting, like Roy, on the centrality of the irrational, historian W. P. Ward made effective use of the concepts of social psychologist Gordon W. Allport in pointing to the tensions engendered between whites and orientals by British Columbia's existence as a pluralist society. The province's whites — thanks, Ward argued, to the important role stereotypical thinking played in such circumstances — could do no other than perceive the orientals as a threat to their values and a serious obstacle to the building of a homogeneous society. "Cultural pluralism," he argued, "was unacceptable to the white community... [for] the plural condition gene-

^{87 &}quot;All," Durkheim wrote in The Rules of Sociological Method (trans. Sarah A. Solovay and John H. Mueller, Chicago, 1938) p. 141, "that [sociology] asks is that the principle of causality be applied to social phenomena." Cited in H. Stuart Hughes, Consciousness and Society: The Reconstruction of European Social Thought 1890-1930 (New York, 1958), p. 281.

⁸⁸ Ken Adachi, The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians (Toronto, 1976).

⁸⁹ Barry Broadfoot, Years of Sorrow, Years of Shame: The Story of the Japanese Canadians in World War Two (Toronto, 1977).

⁹⁰ See, on the first point, her review of Adachi's book in The Canadian Historical Review, LIX(2), June 1978, 255-57. Her own understanding of the issue can be found in Patricia E. Roy, "The Oriental 'Menace' in British Columbia," in S. M. Trofimenkoff, ed., The Twenties in Western Canada (Ottawa, 1972), pp. 243-58; "Introduction," Hilda Glynn-Ward, The Writing on the Wall (Toronto, 1974), pp. vi-xxxi; and "The Soldiers Canada Didn't Want: Her Chinese and Japanese Citizens," Canadian Historical Review, LIX(3), September 1978, 341-57.

rated profound, irrational racial fears [and] stirred a deep longing for the social cohesion which could only be achieved, it seemed, by attaining racial homogeneity."91

The experience of Indians and orientals notwithstanding, acquisition over time of a lower profile was only one way in which different elements of the community might find themselves being viewed in a new way. The assumption by certain groups of a more obvious role in the life of the province could, it soon became clear, have precisely the same result. Where, accordingly, the relative absence of continental European stock in the province's population had allowed the first two generations of historians to indulge their British bias freely — as late as 1937 Sage could identify the province as "distinctly British" 92 — by 1970 historian Norbert MacDonald found it necessary carefully to underscore the role European immigration had played in the growth of its largest urban centre.93 The interest in articulating the multicultural character of British Columbia to the growth of which MacDonald's work pointed was, of course, in part a manifestation of the concern — widespread in the decades after World War II — to build a strong and integrated community by making all its members feel that they had a place in it. One of the first attempts to focus systematic and organized attention on the province's ethnic groups was made in connection with the 1958 centennial, 94 while John Norris' 1971 account of the ethnic presence in British Columbia took form as part of the one-hundredth anniversary celebration of the province's entry into Confederation. 95 Even, however, in devoting itself to the task of redefining the character of the province's life in a way that legitimized the presence in it of many ethnic and racial groups, this work exposed to view many of the factors — prejudice in the host society, the immigrants' pre-migration background, their expected roles and statuses in their new country governing the ethnic experience in British Columbia as elsewhere. Attention was not, however, focused only on those adjustments which had been made relatively painlessly; in some instances the character of the immi-

⁹¹ W. P. Ward, White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Towards Orientals in British Columbia (Montreal, 1978), pp. 92-93.

⁹² Sage, "Five Canadas," p. 34.

^{93 &}quot;The distinctly new feature in Vancouver's make-up [in the post-war period]," he insisted, "was the great increase in persons of European origin." MacDonald, "Population Growth and Change in Seattle and Vancouver, 1880-1960," p. 316.

⁹⁴ Dorothy Blakey Smith, Ethnic Groups in British Columbia: A Selected Bibliography... (Victoria, 1957).

⁹⁵ John Norris, Strangers Entertained: A History of the Ethnic Groups of British Columbia (Vancouver, 1971).

grant experience made it necessary for historians to draw particular attention to the kind of conflict which the clash of cultures produced by that experience could create. In their study of one of the most difficult of these cases, George Woodcock and Ivan Avakumovic sought to explore the tension which resulted when an intensely self-conscious minority—the Doukhobours—determined to maintain its identity collided with a majority no less firmly committed to enforcing what it viewed as minimum standards of conformity.⁹⁶

The rise to prominence of the ethnic fact in British Columbia's life was not the only new reality demanding attention in these years. The social, economic and political divisions which seemed to acquire the status of permanent and central features in the province's life after 1945 also did their share in producing an altered picture of the province's character. There was, of course, nothing novel about the fact of conflict itself, for union activity, strikes and a radical politics had been features of British Columbia's life since the late nineteenth century. The general shape of the province's history and, more especially, the peculiar configuration of its political life had, however, conspired to shift attention to other matters and so allowed these to sink into a general and all encompassing oblivion. Where, that is to say, in other British North American and Canadian communities the clash of rival groups soon became institutionalized in clearly comprehensible political formations, conflict in British Columbia manifested itself in a less coherent rivalry between island and mainland, in faction forming based on attitudes towards the federal tie, and in a politics of personal attachment and ascendancy of a distinctly eighteenthcentury sort, a circumstance which led to a clear tendency to characterize the province's politics as without form and substance. As Coats and Gosnell, reflecting this tendency, put it, "a lack of leadership and even of constructive party organization...has been a feature of the politics of British Columbia...to make the obvious comparison with the eastern colonies, there was here no feud of ruling faces to allay, no Family Compact to uproot, no Clergy Reserve to divide, no complicated fiscal policy to arrange." Even when party lines did emerge in 1903 they appeared to delineate divisions among the members of the province's leading groups which seemed, if anything, more random and indeterminate than those to be found between Liberals and Conservatives in other parts of the country. "An examination of party platforms, resolutions of local and

⁹⁶ George Woodcock and Ivan Avakumovic, The Doukhobors (Toronto and New York, 1968).

⁹⁷ Coats and Gosnell, op. cit., pp. 338, 342.

provincial Associations, speeches from the Throne, [and] debates in the legislature," Edith Dobie's 1936 survey of the first three decades of party history in British Columbia noted, "reveal[s] almost complete agreement between Liberals and Conservatives both in theory and in policies." ⁹⁸

Where, then, the clearly demarcated struggles between Reformers and Tories in Upper Canada or the clash of rival interests on the prairies invited the writing of a history that focused on the activities of distinct political alternatives definable at least to a point in terms of real differences in outlook, the apparently vague and indeterminate character of conflict in British Columbia elicited only cursory and uncomprehending looks from those hurrying by to consider what seemed the manifestly more important, and certainly more readily understood, matters of growth and development. Even so astute an observer as Gosnell could make little sense of what he saw, 99 while later observers were content to repeat D. W. Higgins' attempts to introduce the categories of whigh history into their discussion of the province's politics or deal with such major events as the introduction of party politics in terms of its character as a stabilizing measure in a chaotic and volatile situation. 101

The clear emergence in the 1930s of socialism as a key element in the province's political system forced a reconsideration of the character of that system which, thanks to the Beardian categories employed by its creator, ¹⁰²

- 98 Edith Dobie, "Party History in British Columbia 1903-1933," Pacific Northwest Quarterly, XXVII(2), April 1936, 154.
- ⁹⁹ What he wrote of the period 1897 to 1904, indeed, summarized his sense of the politics of the preceding thirty years: "... the [political] events referred to appear highly kaleidoscopic in their rapidity of succession and changing complexities and combinations... Conditions were in a state of ferment, of unrest, and the process of clarification which ensued [the formation of parties] might be compared to a casual admixture of highly reactive chemical elements." Gosnell, "Part Two," in Scholefield and Gosnell, op. cit., p. 149.
- 100 Neil Robinson, "The Struggle for Responsible Government," in F. W. Howay, ed., Builders of the West: A Book of Heroes (Toronto, 1928), pp. 232-36.
- 101 F. W. Howay, British Columbia: The Making of a Province (Toronto, 1928), p. 241; W. N. Sage, "British Columbia," in George M. Wrong, Chester Martin and Walter N. Sage, The Story of Canada (Toronto, 1929), p. 348.
- The introduction of party lines in 1903, suggested Edith Dobie, had been made partly as the result of a desire on the part of the province's elites to avoid political division based solely on opposition between socialists and non-socialists, since, in their view, such a division could only augment the strength of the socialists, and partly to ensure much-needed stability in the interest of getting particular programs approved. Edith Dobie, "Some Aspects of Party History in British Columbia, 1871-1903," Pacific Historical Review, I(2), June 1932, 247, 250. The major change introduced into the province's political life by the CCF's assumption of the status of official opposition, she wrote in a second article, produced "what seems a new and genuine party alignment on the question of the fundamental structure of

stressed both conflict and the existence of a relationship between economic interest and political behaviour, but by 1948 Sage, returning to a discussion of politics before 1903, abandoned this line of analysis in favour of one cast largely in terms of the conviction that "provincial politics in British Columbia was largely a game of the In's and Out's and a struggle between the Mainland and the Island." Neither John Saywell's 1951 discussion of the relationship between economic interest and political organization in the early history of socialism in British Columbia 104 nor Margaret Ormsby's account of the difficulties economic geography and sociological background placed in the way of effective political organization by British Columbia's farmers 105 committed the same oversight, but what resulted from their work was, nonetheless, only a partial account of the manner in which division and conflict had manifested itself in the province's life.

If this absence of any sustained and comprehensive discussion of conflict in British Columbia society had meant only that students of the province's history were being spared what Donald Creighton once referred to as the "colossal tedium" of dealing with it in terms of the pseudo-struggles of party, 106 it might have been no bad thing; but it meant also that British Columbia's historians — with the exceptions above — maintained a peculiar blind spot when it came to social and economic conflict in general. The result was to reinforce the tendency to eschew discussion of the structure of the province's society in favour of situating it spatially, celebrating its growth and development, and concentrating attention on the great individuals who had contributed so much to its making. Captives of the obvious, enmeshed in the surface of events, British Columbia's historians not only failed to generate anything approaching the work of a

society" and so pointed to the existence of a clear relationship between economic interest and political behaviour. Edith Dobie, "Party History in British Columbia 1903-1933," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, XXVII(2), April 1936, 165.

¹⁰³ W. N. Sage, "Federal Parties and Provincial Political Groups in British Columbia, 1871-1903," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, XII(2), April 1948, 152.

¹⁰⁴ John Tupper Saywell, "Labour and Socialism in British Columbia: A Survey of Historical Development Before 1903," British Columbia Historical Quarterly, XV(3-4), July-October 1951, 129-50.

¹⁰⁵ Margaret A. Ormsby, "The United Farmers of British Columbia: An Abortive Third-Party Movement," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, XVII(1-2), January-June 1953, 53-73.

¹⁰⁶ Donald Creighton, "Sir John Macdonald and Canadian Historians," Canadian Historical Review, XXIX(1), March 1948, 7.

Morton, a Lipset, or a MacPherson; they did not even duplicate L. G. Thomas' achievement in writing the history of an established party.¹⁰⁷

That this was an unsatisfactory state of affairs seemed more than clear by the 1960s. The presence of division and conflict in the province's life had been made obvious both by the character of its politics and by the strength of its labour movement, facts which almost literally cried out for discussion and analysis. It was, appropriately enough in view of the awareness she had earlier shown of the relationship between politics, interest group membership and the character of the economy, Margaret Ormsby who in 1960 made it clear that understanding of a whole dimension of the province's life was lacking. "We are ignorant," she wrote, "of the mainsprings of our political development. We can name our premiers, describe their career, and recount their legislative enactments; but, as yet, we have not probed deeply enough to explain the basis of our early non-party tradition or the basis of the schisms and the realignments which have occurred since parties were first established." 108

The convergence of a clear need to deal with these matters with the realization by Canadian scholars that the concept of class could be a useful one in the analysis of the historical process did much to ensure that the task would be carried out largely through the agency of that analytical tool. Where class and the conflict flowing from it could once have been dismissed as a kind of infantile disorder bound to disappear with the passage of time — "Nowhere in Canada," observed Coats and Gosnell in 1909, "have industrial disputes been waged with greater bitterness and violence than in British Columbia. This, however, is but to say that the province . . . is still in its infancy as an industrial community, and that the impulse which it obeys is western" 109 — the new circumstances did not allow it to be set aside so easily, for even the most casual observer could see that the province's political and industrial life had come to be affected

¹⁰⁷ In undertaking to investigate a regionally or provincially based political formation in terms of the social, economic and geographical factors that brought it into being, each of these scholars demonstrated a far surer grasp of the nature and complexity of the links between these two sets of phenomena than anything which had up to that time been produced by students of the British Columbia experience. See W. L. Morton, The Progressive Party in Canada (Toronto, 1950); Seymour Martin Lipset, Agrarian Socialism: The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in Saskatchewan. A Study in Political Sociology (Berkeley, 1950) C. B. MacPherson, Democracy in Alberta: Social Credit and the Party System (Toronto, 1953); L. G. Thomas, The Liberal Party in Alberta: A History of Politics in the Province of Alberta 1905-1921 (Toronto, 1959).

Margaret Ormsby, "Neglected Aspects of British Columbia's History," British Columbia Library Quarterly, XXIII(4), April 1960, 10.

¹⁰⁹ Coats and Gosnell, op. cit., p. 335.

in what seemed a fundamental way by a species of class activity. The peculiar militance of the British Columbia working class now, indeed, became a subject of discussion in its own right. Labour economist Stuart Jamieson, seeking in 1962 to locate its sources, found them in factors the province's frontier character, its strike-prone type of industry, the influence of conditions in the United States, the structure of the province's labour legislation — specific to British Columbia, 110 while Paul Phillips, preferring to explain its existence in terms of more general factors, emphasized the role played in the rise of a militant labour movement by the unstable character of the market for labour in an economy dependent on primary products for export, the impact of technology, and the effect of social and economic dislocation.111 This, it should be noted, did not mean that Phillips rejected out of hand the idea that class-based organizations in British Columbia had a particular character. For him, however, that special character was to be seen not so much in the circumstances which had given rise to those organizations as in the fact that their members had become more politically active than their counterparts in other sections of the country. In seeking anti-oriental legislation, protection for workers against exploitation by employers, and economic planning that would reduce the instability inherent in a resource-based export-oriented economy, British Columbia workers, Phillips suggested, had early learned the value of political action and so were more fully influenced than other Canadian workers by the socialist ideology which was "in the air" at the turn of the century and after. 112

That the British Columbia political system as a whole was class based became the governing assumption of the most ambitious examination of the linkages between the province's politics, society and economy so far undertaken. Arguing that the "non-partisan" character of British Columbia's politics, the nature of its radicalism and the ascendancy of Social Credit were all linked to the character of the province's social and economic life, political sociologist Martin Robin's semi-popular account of the province's political growth sought to show that the presence of large enterprises in the timber and mining industry, the growth of a wage-earning class, the emergence of a petit-bourgeoisie oriented mainly

¹¹⁰ Stuart Jamieson, "Regional Factors in Industrial Conflict: The Case of British Columbia," Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, XXVIII(3), August 1962, 405-16.

¹¹¹ Paul Phillips, No Power Greater: A Century of Labour in British Columbia (Vancouver, 1967), pp. 160-62.

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 162-64.

towards the service sector and the absence of a significant number of independent commodity producers had produced a political system characterized by a succession of groupings, parties and coalitions through the agency of which the large interests could maintain their influence, by an anti-capitalist rather than an anti-eastern protest tradition, and ultimately by a brand of populism whose petit bourgeois base made it first the enemy and then the ally of the large concentrations of power that dominated the economic life of the province.¹¹³

What Robin's work demonstrated — that the British Columbia political experience was, like other departments of the province's life, susceptible of analysis in terms of perspectives drawn from the social sciences — dramatically underscored the fact that discussion of the province's character and history had come to occupy ground far different than that on which it had earlier stood. How long scholars would continue to find the components — ethnic, racial and class — of which society consisted an appropriate object of investigation would depend, as always, on what resulted from the interplay between the data historical reality presented for consideration and the conceptual tools by means of which those data were perceived and assessed; at the end of the 1970s there was, however, little evidence that this critical process was altering the framework within the confines of which those concerned with the British Columbian past had been working for much of the preceding two decades. The focus of study, it seemed likely, would remain firmly fixed on society and its nature.

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For all that the perspective on the province's past employed by British Columbia's historians altered through time, one element in the changing picture they painted remained fixed and constant. Whether they placed emphasis on the province's imperial and national linkages, on its geography, on its orientation towards eternal markets or on its intelligibility in terms of concepts based on the experience of society at large, they demonstrated a strong and consistent commitment to the idea that British Columbia could not be understood without taking full account of its

¹¹³ See Martin Robin, "The Social Bases of Party Politics in British Columbia," Queen's Quarterly, LXXII(4), 1965-1966, 675-90; his "British Columbia: The Politics of Class Conflict," in Martin Robin, ed., Canadian Provincial Politics: The Party Systems of the Ten Provinces (Toronto, 1972), pp. 27-68; his The Rush for Spoils: The Company Province 1871-1933 (Toronto, 1972), and his Pillars of Profit: The Company Province 1934-1972 (Toronto, 1973). For a sharply critical comment on Robin's work, see Alan C. Cairns, "The Study of the Provinces: A Review Article," BC Studies, XIV, Summer 1972, 73-82; for Robin's reply and a further comment by Cairns, see BC Studies, XVI, Winter 1972-1973, 77-82.

relationship to the world around it. Even as the regional focus of their activities anticipated Canada's national historians in underscoring the legitimacy of the regional approach, they thus avoided falling victim to a narrow provincialism.¹¹⁴

This did not mean that they knew at all times to what larger entity nation, continent or empire — the province was linked; it certainly did not mean that they had a clear sense of the major realities — the individual, class - animating its internal life; least of all did it mean that they were able to produce a fully realized vision of the province's character and history. What, however, it did signify was that the province's most able and representative historians — no matter in what period they wrote — never fell victim to the illusion that the community of which they spoke could be understood in terms of anything other than its place in a larger world. The result was a body of writing which in its attempts to grapple with problems of context, orientation and social dynamic at all times showed its authors anxious — within the conceptual limits specified above — to situate British Columbia in an appropriately comprehensive framework of analysis and discussion. At the same time that it demonstrated the complex nature of the relationship between the historian's circumstances, the reality he contemplates and the work which results, that writing thus also made plain the cosmopolitan thrust of those who concerned themselves with the past and the character of Canada's westernmost province.115

¹¹⁴ Sage's insistence, in opposition to the Laurentianism that was emerging in the 1930s as an important organizing principle in the study of Canadian history, that the regions of Canada should provide the main focus of the historian's study found a parallel on the prairies in the form of W. L. Morton's 1946 plea for a Canadian history that would take due account of the experience, and point of view, of the parts which composed it. Not, however, until the late 1960s, when shifts in the distribution of national power had persuaded some eastern-based historians that a centralist view of the country's history was no longer tenable, did the regional approach find a following in their part of the country. See Sage, "Five Canadas"; W. L. Morton, "Clio in Canada: The Interpretation of Canadian History," University of Toronto Quarterly, XV(3), April 1946, 227-34; J. M. S. Careless, "Limited Identities' in Canada," Canadian Historical Review, L(1), March 1969, 1-10; Paul G. Cornel et al., Canada: Unity in Diversity (Toronto, 1967); Mason Wade, ed., Regionalism in the Canadian Community, 1867-1967: Canadian Historical Association Centennial Seminars (Toronto, 1969).

¹¹⁵ For a recent example of this kind of cosmopolitan regionalism, see A. D. Scott, "Introduction: Notes on a Western Viewpoint," BC Studies, XIII, Spring 1972, 3-15.