

Race and Class in British Columbia: A Reply*

Basically Professor Warburton and I disagree about the role of ideas and culture in history. He believes that ideology and human behaviour are rooted in "the experienced objective relationship which workers have as a result of their commodity status in the structure of industrial capitalism." I have argued that, to a considerable degree, ideas and culture are independent variables which have interacted with one another, and with social, economic, and political factors, to establish basic patterns of human behaviour. This disagreement is at least as old as the first debate between Marxist and non-Marxist scholars and I see no possibility for its resolution here. Clearly Professor Warburton and I are as two ships that pass in the night.

The evidence which I have presented, while admittedly not conclusive, strongly suggests that others have exaggerated the extent of class consciousness and underestimated the height of racial barriers in the history of British Columbia. Professor Warburton takes me to task for failing to pay sufficient heed to what he terms the "objective" factors of social and economic life in British Columbia. He offers no evidence in support of his assertions but rather relies upon brief, selective references to other commentators. Unfortunately, to some extent both of us are talking in a vacuum, for we lack a systematic, comprehensive investigation of the working-class condition in British Columbia, the only point on which Professor Warburton and I apparently agree. At this stage, however, I believe the weight of evidence lies with me, since he has presented none.

Finally, in his concluding paragraph Professor Warburton suggests that I intend "to deal another blow to scholars on the left who are seen by supporters of the prevailing ideology to be either propagandists or very misguided in their judgment." He apparently needs to be reminded that imputation has no legitimate place in scholarly discourse. It is, after all, a two-edged sword.

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* See *BC Studies*, 49, Spring 1981.