

Book Reviews

The Politics of Racism; The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians During the Second World War, by Ann Gomer Sunahara. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1981. Pp. xii, 222.

This is a very good book, unquestionably the best study we have yet had on the unhappy fate of Canadian Japanese during the Second World War. The research is complete, much more so than in Ken Adachi's *The Enemy That Never Was*, the tone is generally moderate even in the face of the appalling actions of the government and people of Canada, and the prose is clear. A first-rate job.

The heroes are also the right ones — Hugh Keenleyside and Henry Angus of the Department of External Affairs, who fought for a sane policy; RCMP Assistant Commissioner Mead, who believed the Japanese loyal; and the Japanese Canadians themselves, who endured tribulations with fortitude. The villains are the correct ones, too — men such as Hon. Ian Mackenzie, the British Columbia Minister in Ottawa whose virulence was matched only by such out-and-out racist fanatics as Macgregor Macintosh, Mackenzie's appointee to committees charged with responsibility for the Japanese problem, and Mackenzie King, whose government acted out of political motives in expelling the Japanese.

And yet this reader has doubts that this is the whole story. First, I am uncomfortable with the idea that Mackenzie King was a racist. It is now almost conventional wisdom to charge that the Prime Minister was anti-Semitic and anti-Oriental and to point to his government's policy of excluding Jewish refugees in the 1930s or to its refusal to admit Oriental immigrants. It is not my intent to justify the unjustifiable; I could not even if I had the will to do so. But King, like all of us, was a product of his times, and in his era the level of racism that society tolerated (and expected) as a norm was higher than it is today. One could denounce "the yellow peril" or "the kikes" without violating accepted standards of civilized society — and probably without being a racist. If everyone acted

this way, and I think virtually everyone did, then is King a racist? Macintosh and Mackenzie, on the other hand, exceeded that definition with their vicious vindictiveness. I wish that Ms. Sunahara had been willing to venture on those kinds of distinctions.

Secondly, it does not seem to me that her account, able and complete as it is, adequately explains why the people of British Columbia were so adamant in their opposition to the unassimilated Japanese in their midst both before and after 7 December 1941. The politicians, busy attempting to mobilize Canada for war, were not about to enmesh themselves in the difficult task of expelling the Japanese from the Pacific Coast unless there was massive popular support for such action. That support was there, and given the government's priorities — to keep the people's eyes firmly fixed on the overriding issue of the need for the fullest prosecution of the war — it had to act to meet B.C.'s concerns, particularly as the single Minister from British Columbia wanted it to act and was likely prepared to resign if it did not. In a war situation, King had no option but to go along, and Sunahara quotes Jack Pickersgill's later comment that "King, in his heart, did not approve of the [Japanese] policies. . . . He recognized that opinion in British Columbia, that counted as far as votes were concerned, could not be ignored." That rings almost exactly true for me, although in 1941-42 it was support for the government's war policies and not votes that mattered.

Similarly, that kind of attitude explains why King's cabinet, full as it was in early 1942 of tired, harassed men waging a far vaster war than they could ever have contemplated, rejected the liberal advice of the civil servants and went along with stern action. There was a war on, Hong Kong and its Canadian battalions had been lost, there seemed to be a threat to the Coast from the Japanese Empire, and the Japanese Canadians either were in danger from Anglo vigilantes or were themselves a potential danger to the state. (If Takeo Nakano's *Within the Barbed Wire Fence* is correct, some *were* a danger to the state.) In any case, the politicians decided they had to act on this political question, no matter what the bureaucrats said. I do not like that decision one whit, but I can understand, as Ms. Sunahara cannot, why it was made. I can also understand why the people of B.C. and Canada supported it enthusiastically, and it does not surprise me that a few years later opinion began to shift toward support for a policy of leniency. The Canadian tendency, amply demonstrated by October 1970 and its aftermath, is to support brutal action in a crisis and to feel sorry about it afterwards. Again, I wish that Sunahara had managed to get these kinds of points into her book.

Finally, I bridle just a bit at Ms. Sunahara's assertion that the secret files of government have been revealed to her alone and for the first time. Ken Adachi had every opportunity to make use of the same material (with one or two relatively minor exceptions) she saw; if he failed to use the King and Mackenzie Papers, both of which were open, or departmental files, that was only because he did not choose to do so. It does no credit to the author of a fine book to suggest that she is revealing the truth suppressed by a guilty government. The government was guilty, and this is the truth. Let the truth speak for itself.

York University

J. L. GRANATSTEIN

Within the Barbed Wire Fence, by Takeo Ujo Nakano with Leatrice Nakano. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980. Pp. 126, *illus.*

For most immigrants British Columbia has been a place for doing, for getting ahead and making a future. In such a setting change tends to be located in the environment rather than in self, and life takes on a particular materialism. "Nature" becomes "resources" and as such is bared to the arsenal of industrial technology. This has been the predominant British Columbian pattern, but not the only pattern. Some immigrants sought havens in mountain valleys, others peered mystically into the forest, and almost everyone worked out a new life here in relation to memories of home elsewhere. Thus the past enters British Columbia as nostalgia and, for some of the most sensitive among us, nature represents the best of what is new.

Takeo Ujo Nakano was one of the many who came to get ahead. As a teen-ager on his uncle's berry farm in Hammond in 1920 he dreamed of owning a large farm of his own. Later, a mill hand at Woodfibre, he dreamed of putting aside enough money so that he, his wife (whom he married in Japan in 1930) and their daughter could return comfortably to Japan. Events would take another course. After Pearl Harbor he was sent to a work camp in Yellowhead Pass. His wife and daughter went to Greenwood. Eventually he learned that he would be reunited with his family, but official plans changed and he found himself in the Slocan Valley. He and several other deeply disappointed men refused to work, and for their intransigence were sent to jail in the Immigration Building in Vancouver and from there to a prisoner-of-war camp at Angler on the north shore of Lake Superior. There he lived with hundreds of other

Japanese men behind a double barbed-wire fence and sentry towers. Most of the prisoners were *gambariya*, Japanese diehards who had sought imprisonment as an act of loyalty and defiance. Takeo Nakano was not one of them but, speaking no English and attached to his homeland, he was not a Canadian either. After fourteen months in the camp he applied for and was given a job at Canada Packers in Toronto where, before the end of the war, his wife and daughter joined him. In 1948 they became Canadian citizens.

Throughout this experience he kept a diary and wrote poetry. He particularly admired the *tanka*, a short poem of thirty-one syllables arranged in five lines, but he also wrote *haiku* (seventeen syllables in three lines) for the poetry club at Angler. Parts of his diary and subsequent recollections and a few of his poems are gathered in a short book that has been prepared with the assistance of his second daughter Leatrice, a graduate student in English at the University of Toronto.

The result, as Peter Ward points out in a helpful biographical and historical "Afterword," is the "only available, substantial account of the experiences and reflections of an Issei, or first generation immigrant from Japan." *Within the Barbed Wire Fence* is the record of a sensitive man in humiliating circumstances far from home. Essentially, he retreated into poetry and nature:

From high in the Rockies,
Overflowing boulders,
Gushing downwards,
Clear cold water
My life sustains.

Letters from his wife were lined out by the censor, but on an otherwise faceless Christmas day in Angler there were Japanese pastries at dinner. They had been sent, the prisoners were told, from Kaslo and Greenwood. Through these pages geese fly overhead, dandelions wind through barbed wire, a praying mantis is "black and lovable." The book is itself a poem, a journey into the interior. About it hangs an other-worldliness that reminds me, curiously, of Gabrielle Roy's *Rue Deschambault* because, I suppose, Catholic Christianity and Japanese art both transcend the North American mainstream. *Within the Barbed Wire Fence* is a small treasure, not only because it is a vivid view from the inside of the Japanese evacuation, but also because it deals with the overriding Canadian challenge of knowing oneself in a strange place. No wonder, as Takeo Nakano put it in a prize-winning *tanka*:

As final resting place,
 Canada is chosen.
 On citizenship paper,
 Signing
 Hand trembles.

University of British Columbia

COLE HARRIS

Bull of the Woods, The Gordon Gibson Story, by Gordon Gibson with Carol Renison. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1980. Pp. 310, \$16.95 hardcover.

Gordon Gibson, through his own words as recorded by Renison, comes through as a racist, sexist, bullying and often insensitive man. He also emerges as a tough, often courageous, sometimes high-minded and surprisingly honest entrepreneur. Perhaps because one senses that only such an individual could have run the risks he ran, built the mills he built and established the forest companies he did in the pioneer conditions of the 1920s to 1950s, one winces at the revelations but reads on.

Too much of the book is a personal diary, written as if in the first person, in which Gibson eulogizes himself. This is unfortunate because the events he brought about, the territory on which he imposed his will and the people whose lives he affected are exceedingly interesting to the reader who is concerned with British Columbia's history. Fewer precious revelations and more detailed descriptions of events would have made the book a lasting tribute to the man. He is worthy of a lasting tribute, the negative characteristics notwithstanding.

His version of the logging and fishing conditions and small mills in the 1920s, of boats, log-booms, storms and mishaps in dangerous seas through that decade and the next few, and, most particularly, of the establishment of Tahsis after the war are worth the reading.

During the war, the Gibson brothers obtained contracts to build several airports on Vancouver Island and the North Coast. Tofino, Ladysmith and Sandspit were among the projects. As well they obtained the rights to cut any spruce on Vancouver Island; hence the logging camps at Zeballos, Tahsis, Ucluelet and elsewhere. Out of these contracts and camps they built a not inconsiderable empire. It was no smooth development; there were tragedies, fires and losses, and there is little doubt that a capacity to take risks and live with the consequences was essential to their ultimate success. Tahsis was such a risk. Its success depended on

the possibility of deep-sea ships loading there, and of a small crew building the wharf, camp and site in a very short time. The task was completed, but its completion would not have been predicted by any outsider.

Gibson discusses — one wishes in greater detail — the scandalous Forest Management Licence giveaways of the (first) Bennett era. It was these that encouraged him to enter politics as the Liberal member from Lillooet. His anger was that of the “small” logger versus the giants, and it is as fresh today as it was during the Sloan hearings. The 1978 Legislature stands sadly as a repeat performance, but the original Gordon Gibson was no longer in the house in 1978 bringing to his anger and accusations the wealth of experience in the woods.

His argument had several aspects to it worthy of attention today. The one usually understood to be the whole of it was that big companies were given monopoly rights to timber. There is no doubt this is true. The argument of the 1950s government was identical to that of the 1978 government: that only big companies (like BCFP, which kept its timber licences even though the Minister, Sommers, was jailed for accepting bribes) could properly reforest and maintain the resource. Gibson contends that most of the reforestation argument was phoney because nature reforests faster and cheaper than foresters. He also maintains that the licences guaranteed these companies such an excess of resource rights that their inefficient use of the timber was predictable. He has little kindness in heart for Justice Sloan, whom he regarded as frontman for the monopolists. His comments on politicians of the time are illuminating: he respects Conservatives and socialists as doing their proper task in representing their respective class interests. His wrath is reserved for the opportunists and unprincipled, all of whom (though he exempts Gaglardi!) were in the government benches.

One gives a somewhat unrepresentative version of the book by concentrating on the interesting historical events. Running through it are anecdotes about the personal life of the man which are of less historical interest except as they might reveal attitudes probably common to his time and situation.

He talks in soap-opera terms of his love and respect for his mother, wives, and assorted “lady-friends.” Indeed, he says at one point that his closest friends were all women. This is consistent with the other view — that women are designed for the benefits of men and their rightful task is child-rearing and keeping the home.

He enjoyed the friendship as well of Indians, Chinese and other non-white men — again, however, within stereotyped roles. This leads to a rather amusing passage in which he is burdened with a Chinese male housekeeper because his wife objects to his female housekeeper in the Tahsis camp quarters. He quickly sends the new servant home because while he could tolerate the rumours of a liaison with the woman, it was too much to entertain rumours regarding a Chinese man.

University of British Columbia

PATRICIA MARCHAK

The House (Convention Centre, Stadium, Rapid Transit System, Etc.) That Jack Built: Mayor Jack Volrich and Vancouver Politics, by Stan Persky. Vancouver and Toronto: New Star Books, 1980. Pp. 226, map and photographs, \$3.95.

While this book fits within the “developers-are-the-root-of-evil” genre of contemporary urban political criticism, it steers clear of the simplistic self-righteousness and narrow malice that so often mark the genre and rests instead upon wide-ranging narrative presented with modesty, wit and humour. Persky’s deftly candid introduction serves to ward off most potential criticism. He calls his work “an informal assessment of recent Vancouver politics,” and states that “readers might as well be forewarned that this saga tends neither towards the scandalous nor the scholarly.” He is moved to write the book not only by “the sheer fun” of doing so, but as well by his belief that better civic government depends upon a better-informed public and by his conviction that those who think seriously about civic issues ought “to spend more of their time and talents addressing the general public rather than just talking to each other.” Persky confesses to the motive of “lending history a helping hand in making judgements.” Since the book is entirely a free-enterprise product, he does not have to express “obsequious thanks to grant-dispensing government agencies, as authors are often required to do these days.” He does give thanks to Joachim Foikas, Vancouver’s federally funded Town Fool of the late sixties, for reintroducing him “to the rhymes of Mother Goose, which, if not exactly precise about the evils of capitalism, none the less speak to the human condition.” Persky mentions that his interest in civic government was furthered in his student days by his being jailed for loitering in the vicinity of the Vancouver Police Department’s riot squad while it was on active duty.

The book was intended to influence the outcome of the November 1980 Vancouver civic election. The cover bears photographs of Jack Volrich (looking grim), Harry Rankin (looking avuncular) and Mike Harcourt (looking forthright — and amazingly hirsute). Persky's actual recommendations, however, are almost restrained.

In suggesting that Mike Harcourt is the best choice among mayoral candidates, it hasn't been my intention to portray Jack Volrich as a notable example of evil. . . . It is not Volrich's sincerity which is questioned . . . but the appropriateness of his views. Nor, in recommending Mike Harcourt, is it suggested that he is without fault. (p. 209)

The book was sold by the Harcourt organization at campaign events and provided effective advertising for both Harcourt and COPE.

The book has three parts. The first, "The Wages of Sin and Other Inflationary Factors," deals with morality issues in the city, with Volrich's becoming mayor, and with Jack Poole and his Daon Development Corporation. The second, "Warding Off the Evils of Democracy," deals with the ward issue and the Downtown Eastside Residents Association. The third, "The Edifice Complex," deals with the developments listed in the book's title and also with such issues as Sunday closing and the response to gypsy moths in Kitsilano — the way in which the conflict over spraying the moths was resolved is seen by Persky as a model deserving wider application. Woven through the three parts is a political chronology of the 1976-1980 period. The style is lively, the humour is entertaining, and much factual information is presented.

Persky relies almost exclusively for his source material upon reports published from 1976 to 1980 in Vancouver's daily newspapers and local periodicals. While his ability and insight do allow him to transcend the day-to-day immediacy imposed upon working reporters and to attain the longer and larger view, several deficiencies remain. Each chapter has a detailed bibliography, but quotations and dialogue are not linked to sources, leaving the impression that Persky himself was doing such things as crouching beside Jack Poole's desk or hiding in Helen Boyce's kitchen cupboard. The major error in the book is one of omission. Persky devotes much attention to Poole — indeed Poole and Volrich are the main characters in the book — but nowhere does he directly connect Poole with Volrich. What Persky did not know, since he did not come across mention of it in the press, was that Poole worked closely and directly with Volrich in the latter's mayoral campaigns and served, in particular, as one of the principal campaign fund raisers. To devote so much of the

book to the two Jacks but to remain ignorant of their real relationship is no small blooper.

In describing the crucial Volrich-Harcourt contest for the TEAM mayoral nomination in 1976, Persky follows Allan Fotheringham and Sean Rossiter in depicting Harcourt as virtuously above-board and Volrich as underhandedly conniving. Such an interpretation is false. (I was vice-president of TEAM in 1976 and in close touch with both men and with their supporters as the events unfolded.) Persky states that "at least two or three" of the new recruits Harcourt brought into TEAM "were known social democrats, which was sufficient evidence for his rival to raise the alarm" (p. 24). In fact most of Harcourt's recruits were NDP members or supporters and NDP membership lists were used as the primary means of contacting his potential recruits. While such recruiting, as Persky would be quick to point out, was neither illegal nor undemocratic, it did subvert the principle that provincial party membership would be irrelevant within TEAM, and it did lend a rather hollow ring to Harcourt's charge (made after it was evident that his own takeover bid had failed) that Volrich was leading a right-wing takeover. Volrich had announced his candidacy at an early date and had made no move to recruit supporters into TEAM until after Harcourt's effort was underway. The irony is that Harcourt could have easily won the 1976 nomination (and then the election) had he announced his candidacy in good time and followed precedent within TEAM in not seeking to pack the nomination meeting.

It is easy to make too little or too much of the mayor in Vancouver politics. As far as formal legal powers are concerned the mayor of Vancouver has none of importance and is weaker than every other mayor in British Columbia and weaker than the mayors of every other major Canadian city. Informally, because the mayor is accepted as the spokesman for the council and for the city (and perhaps because much of the public is ignorant about the actual weakness of the mayor), the position brings a good deal of local fame. Those who care more for power than fame have little reason to seek or keep the position; yet, since political fame requires at least the appearance of power, those who enjoy the fame must pretend they do have power — hence the heady promises, the inflated claims, and the quick and nimble jumping to avoid being tripped up by the two real (and equally unpredictable) holders of real power: the provincial government and the local voters. Often critics of mayors attribute failure or inconsistency to incompetence of the incumbent and fail to recognize the deficiencies of the position — thus these critics perpetuate

the myth of mayoral power in Vancouver. Persky avoids this pitfall. He notes, in referring to both Mother Goose's Jack and Mayor Jack, "Not everything is exactly as it seems. For instance, there is some question whether Jack actually did build the house attributed to him. . . . Finally, there is considerable dispute over whether this structure is a real home or merely a house of cards" (p. iii).

Persky has written an engaging and effective book. Let us hope that he writes another for Vancouver in 1984.

University of British Columbia

PAUL TENNANT

A Picture History of British Columbia, by George Woodcock. Edmonton: Hurtig, 1980. Pp. 240, illus., \$18.95.

To someone who knows little of British Columbia this may be a pleasing introduction to the province's history. On the whole, Woodcock succeeds in writing a text that complements and supplements the approximately 400 illustrations that are the real *raison d'être* of this volume. It is unfortunate, however, that limitations of space within the book and the apparent absence of research and writing time prevented Woodcock from using his justly acclaimed literary talents to produce more than a very pedestrian history of British Columbia.

Woodcock's approach is basically chronological. Given his concentration on the physical development of the province and on its politics, it is appropriate that he begins with explorers and ends with comments on BCRIC and the present discontent with the federal Liberal government. Seldom does he venture into what can loosely be called social history. There is, for example, considerable attention to the organized unemployed of the 1930s but otherwise there is scant mention of labour, organized or not. Occasionally Woodcock breaks from chronology. "Recognizing the Landscape," a section on the artists who visited in the late nineteenth century, is the most successful of these; the text nicely explains why the artists came, the accompanying paintings show what they saw. "Duncan of Metlakatla and the Anglican Schism" [the Hills-Cridge affair] seems an eccentric choice to represent religion; it is virtually the only mention of religion in the volume. A third topical section, "Facing the Yellow Peril!" demonstrates some of the problems that compression causes throughout the book. Though Woodcock mentions the Vancouver riot of 1907 and agreements with Japan to limit immigration, he implies

that the Japanese only “became the target of special discrimination after Pearl Harbour [*sic*]” (p. 123). Only in a narrow technical sense is Woodcock correct for he confines his discussion to immigration regulations and ignores the whole collection of provincial laws and customs designed to restrict the activities of both Chinese and Japanese. Oversimplification and the lack of research also mar Woodcock’s political history. It is true that S. F. Tolmie was a member of a pioneer British Columbia family but surely that is not the reason why British Columbians elected him as their Premier in 1928 (p. 186).

The haste with which this volume must have been written probably explains why there is little evidence that Woodcock did any research beyond a few “standard” books on British Columbia. For instance, he repeats the story of British settlers leaving Walhachin permanently on the day the First World War was declared (p. 168), a myth effectively demolished by Nelson Riis in his 1973 *BC Studies* article. A slip of the pen no doubt explains why Rossland and Nelson have become ghost towns (p. 128). That such a slip passed uncorrected is a symptom of the coastal bias of the volume and its preoccupation with the south coastal region.

The problem of selecting illustrations for the book must have been great. British Columbia has attracted a number of excellent artists and photographers and much of their work is readily available. In many cases the choices have been superb and the brief captions are usually informative. Some of the logging scenes, a CPR construction sleigh train, and the Rossland Ladies Ice Hockey team, to cite a few, are particularly fresh and memorable. Given the wealth of photographs available it is disappointing to see, yet again, some otherwise excellent photographs that have become hackneyed with frequent use. Appealing as he is, the young lad running down a New Westminster hill to catch up with his soldier father is a tired symbol of British Columbia going to war in 1940. Even more regrettable is the use of modern photographs of old buildings that produces such incongruities as a television antenna atop Captain Ella’s home of the 1860s (p. 46) and a mini-skirted girl striding in front of Dr. Helmcken’s 1852 cottage (p. 29). The reproduction of photographs is not always as clear as possible and some of the maps have been so reduced in size that they have become decorations not guides to geographical features.

The book includes a nominal index but lacks a bibliography or list of suggested readings for those who might wish to pursue the subject further. For someone who does not want to know a great deal about

British Columbia's history and who enjoys historical photographs, without being too critical about the quality of reproduction, this is a good book.

University of Victoria

PATRICIA E. ROY

The British Columbia Parliament Buildings, edited by Martin Segger.
Vancouver: Associated Resource Consultants Ltd., 1979. \$6.95.

This book is very well conceived and reasonably well executed. Every year thousands of tourists and school children troop through the legislative precincts in Victoria, and for a great many of them, perhaps the majority, a memento of that occasion is most welcome. Rulers have always attempted to construct grand palaces which readily symbolized to their subjects the awesome power of the state. These buildings in Victoria seem a match for the grandest pretensions of provincial governments in British Columbia. That grandeur is remarkably well portrayed in this book.

Martin Segger, an art historian at the University of Victoria, has very sensibly produced a book with a popular audience in mind. In particular the introduction by Segger and Douglas Franklin, the epilogue by George Giles on the restoration program, and the appendix, "Tour of the Precinct," are all well-written pieces which provide an adequate guide to the tourist. Indeed, the last mentioned serves as a very useful aid to anyone wishing to have an organized procession through the buildings, although it might have been improved by including more details for this purpose. The long piece from the 10 February 1898 edition of the *Victoria Times* entitled, "A Marble Palace," is also well written, though perhaps a little flowery for modern tastes, and little harm would have been done the book had it been appropriately edited. No doubt Mr. Segger was grateful to have found it, since it does provide a nineteenth-century view of such an edifice.

The book is much more, however, than a mere tourist brochure. The sections on events surrounding the architectural competition and the actual construction are most informative, and would be of professional interest to historians, architects and others interested in the late nineteenth century. The one disappointment with the book — and perhaps this merely reflects the bias of a political scientist — is the cursory treatment given the political process that takes place within the handsome

precinct. Segger recognizes that there would be interest in such discussion and provides two pages that give a very brief overview of legislative history and of the organization of the assembly itself. He is, however, a bit too concerned with the coat-of-arms and the provincial flag and not enough concerned with the actual processes of government. Moreover, he commits an unfortunate error when he suggests that the Lieutenant-Governor is appointed on the advice of the provincial administration. This is true for the Australian states, but in Canada Lieutenant-Governors are appointed by the Governor-General, who acts, in effect, on the advice of the federal cabinet. The provincial cabinet has no official say in the appointment and often, in the history of the province, has not even been consulted.

But not very many will notice this small error, and no doubt a great many will be relieved not to have a civics lecture dished up with architectural description and explanation. The book clearly serves the purpose for which it was intended, and it has been, quite deservedly, a commercial success. At \$6.95 it is a genuine bargain.

University of Victoria

TERRY MORLEY

Fighting Joe Martin Founder of the Liberal Party in the West: A Blow by Blow Account, by Peter Brock. Toronto and Vancouver: The National Press, 1981. Pp. 418.

Fighting Joe Martin held a number of positions in four parliaments, but none for long. After being a school teacher in Ontario, he moved west to establish a law practice in Portage la Prairie and was elected to the Manitoba legislature in 1883. When the Liberals came to power in Manitoba in 1886 Martin became Attorney-General in the Greenway cabinet. He resigned his provincial seat to run unsuccessfully for a federal one in 1891. He went to Ottawa after a by-election in Winnipeg in 1893 only to be defeated in 1896. Moving to British Columbia, he served as a Member of the Legislative Assembly from 1898 to 1903, including a brief period as Premier in 1900. In 1909 he was elected as a Liberal member of the British House of Commons. Joseph Martin had, to say the least, a chequered political career.

Martin's inability to retain an elected position for any length of time was in large part the consequence of his abrasive personality and apparent inability to co-operate with others. Biographies of unpleasant individ-

uals have been written before, but the author of this one also faced a second, more important, problem: a lack of sources. There are virtually no Martin papers. The author acknowledges this deficiency and recognizes that Martin's "story must be pieced together from fragmentary documents and a great deal of guesswork," but he has written the biography anyway because "an insubstantial study seemed preferable to no study at all" (p. 19). Whether or not one agrees with that point, it is still disturbing to see so many crucial conclusions based on inference. Brock claims, for instance, that Martin became Premier of British Columbia partly as a result of a pre-arranged and secret agreement with Lieutenant-Governor McInnes that if he were able to defeat Charles Semlin in the Legislature Martin would then be called upon to form an administration. But Brock has no hard evidence for the claim. It is based, as the author admits in a footnote, on "an inference" (p. 231, fn. 14). The paucity of evidence also leads to other problems that the author reveals but does not acknowledge.

The lack of documentation makes possible all sorts of *ex cathedra* generalizations that are either dubious or, sometimes, simply ridiculous. The biography begins with the assertion that "Fighting Joe Martin was probably the most powerful and successful rebel the Canadian West has ever had" (p. 4). The reader has scarcely had time to assimilate that claim before being told that Martin was also part of "a continuous line of radicalism" in the west from Louis Riel to J. S. Woodworth (p. 13). This assertion is not just tossed out as a throwaway comment but is said to give rise "to an intriguing theoretical framework from which one can derive new insights into the character of the west." The author obviously takes the point seriously, but there would seem to be a problem of definition. By whatever stretch of the imagination one might turn Riel into a radical, nowhere in this biography is the nature of Martin's radicalism described with any precision. Indicative of the problem is the fact that the words "radical," "rebel" and "reformer" are all used interchangeably. To the extent that Martin espoused laissez-faire liberalism, and particularly the idea of free trade, he was hardly radical at all. Indeed, one might even suggest that there is some contradiction between the claim that Martin was both a radical and the founder of the Liberal party in the west — except that, in truth, he was neither. In British Columbia it could very well be argued that Martin did much to facilitate the coming to power of McBride's Conservatives in 1903, and that his ambition to be Premier along with his inconsistency and inability to work with others actually retarded the development of the Liberal party in the

province. If one were looking for line of continuity within the narrower context of the Liberal party in British Columbia it would be significant to note that, towards the end of his life, Fighting Joe Martin practised law in partnership with Gerald McGeer.

This biography is very confusing, and that may inadvertently reflect something of the nature of Martin's career. The author, in his effort to portray Martin as an idealist, does not seem to want to consider the possibility that he was really an opportunist who blew with the prevailing winds of political expedience. Martin's personal loyalties in politics were always shifting, he accepted the support of different railway interests at different times, and, in order to attract voters, he took an anti-French line during the separate schools controversy in Manitoba and an anti-Oriental position in British Columbia. The author is constantly having to strain the reader's credibility in an attempt to explain Martin's apparently erratic career according to a consistent set of principles. While perhaps distasteful to a biographer, it would have been easier and probably more accurate to concede that Martin was a fractious individual with no overriding philosophy and little consistency. The lack of clarity in the broad strokes is only exacerbated by the sloppiness of the fine brush work of the portrait. Thus the adult Martin was both short (p. 4) and not short (p. 232) and, although he was born in Milton, Ontario, towards the end of the book the west has become "his native region" (p. 304).

In his preface, Peter Brock writes that one of the problems of Canadian historiography is that "academic critiques tend to be excessively harsh on the minutiae of learned works" (p. 2). Lest he feel that this review suffers from that failing, it should be made clear that his book not only contains minor inaccuracies but also, in my view at least, the entire interpretation of Martin's career is wrong-headed. Having cut away the pretension and confusion from this biography, all we are really left with, rather than a leading western Canadian radical, is a scrappy little railway politician who all too often represented the worst of the west's prejudices.

Simon Fraser University

ROBIN FISHER

Town and City: Aspects of Western Canadian Urban Development, edited by Alan F. J. Artibise. Canadian Plains Studies, 10. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina, 1981.

This is a book of historical essays about urban development in western Canada. Its compass is broad enough to include British Columbia as well as the Prairies, and to cover the social as well as the economic and political aspects of urban growth. Unfortunately, this breadth of coverage is more apparent than real. Ten of the fifteen articles are about the development of towns and cities on the Prairies from the acquisition of Rupert's Land by the Dominion of Canada to the outbreak of the First World War. This concentration of attention would have been justifiable if the editor had integrated his material into a coherent analysis of urban development on the Prairies in the region's formative period. He has eschewed that task, however, and attempted to broaden the book by including a smattering of articles on other subjects. Whatever the value of these pieces individually, they detract from the thematic unity of the book. The reader is left with bits and pieces of an account of urban development in Western Canada and without even a coherent analysis of the one aspect of that development which is dealt with thoroughly.

The book begins with two articles on "The Economic Framework" which are apparently designed to explain the context in which particular towns and cities developed in the Canadian West. Paul Phillips discusses Winnipeg's gradual decline after 1913 as the Prairie metropolis, and Robert McDonald explains how Vancouver displaced Victoria as the dominant coastal city. These are interesting articles, but they hardly provide a framework for the following ten case studies on Prairie urban development before World War I. Winnipeg is not discussed in these articles, and of course there is nothing on British Columbia. It is true that there are three more essays in the book: a brief and highly descriptive account of the evolution of Victoria's economy by Charles Forward; a well-researched but incredibly ingenuous analysis of the Calgary Children's Aid Society (1909-1920) by Henry Klassen (who would do well writing for *The Islander*); and a very good essay by Patricia Roy on Vancouver's municipal relief policies between 1907 and 1929. I suppose these pieces are supposed to round out the picture of urban development in western Canada, but how they do so remains obscure.

If there is a theme to this book, it is "boosterism," which Alan Artibise discusses in relation to the major Prairie cities, in his own contribution to the collection. His analysis here is really an extension of one he has de-

veloped elsewhere, but he adds interesting detail on the uses of incorporation, annexation and fiscal policy to "boost" cities economically. His perspective is more critical than that of many of his contributors, who have little to say about the general issues their analyses raise. John Selwood and Evelyn Baril discuss the Hudson's Bay Company's early, unsuccessful efforts to take advantage of its land-holdings on the Prairies to promote new townsites, and William Brennan reviews the experience in Regina and Moose Jaw, where the federal government entered into a hardly more successful development consortium with the CPR. No real effort is made here or elsewhere to generalize about the relationship between government and big business or the role of the two actors in urban development.

One point which does emerge is that there was vigorous competition for the favours of business and government among local communities, and "boosterism" was as much a phenomenon of the small town as the city. Barry Potyondi offers a case study of boosting in Minnedosa, Manitoba, and Paul Voisey provides a broader and more illuminating account of similar activities in a set of towns in southern Alberta. Voisey's analysis stands out because it makes clear what boosting meant for the people involved, and it sheds light on the whole social history of the Prairies. As such, it makes the kind of general contribution which few of the other authors attempt. Max Foran's article on Wesley Fletcher Orr, the first mayor of the city of Calgary, is a rather sketchy case study of a booster, which tells us more about the man than the phenomenon. Lewis Thomas and A. A. den Otter offer more general accounts of the development of Saskatoon and Lethbridge, respectively. Both focus on economic development and the efforts to secure it. John Gilpin's study of the city of Strathcona is a complement and a contrast, because he explains why the city was unable to divert development from Edmonton, immediately across the river. Carl Betke's piece on Edmonton touches on municipal efforts to boost the city, but it is mostly concerned with the town's social organization. Betke deals, as few of the others do, with some of the conflicts arising from class divisions.

There is certainly the material here for some generalizations about boosterism on the Prairies before World War I, but the authors, for the most part, prefer to avoid the risks of interpretation. All the articles are well documented, and researchers will be glad to have them available as sources of information. However, a student looking for some way to interpret the development of the Prairie West will be hard pressed to find it. Boosterism was evidently a pervasive phenomenon on the Prairies,

and it had some effect on the urban structure of the region. However, it seems mainly to have worked to the advantage of the CPR and a variety of lesser entrepreneurs. One is left with the impression that the booster mentality was more an effect than a cause of the pattern of economic development in western Canada. This does not make it any less interesting a phenomenon, but one would have expected the authors to make more of an effort to explain how and why it arose. To do this, they would have had to bring a broader perspective to bear on their work and to consider more than the documents in front of them.

Once again this book illustrates that British Columbia and the Prairies are not part of the same region of Canada. It is obvious that one of the central features of Prairie urban development — that the flatness of the terrain made the choice of location for settlements rather arbitrary — is inapplicable to most of British Columbia. Moreover, differences in the economic base were bound to create a different pattern of urban development. Robert McDonald's article provides some insight into this, and Patricia Roy offers a side light on the use of Vancouver as a winter refuge by workers from the interior. However, there are no studies in this book of the B.C. resource towns, so that the picture is incomplete. Since Lethbridge was a mining town, an obvious opportunity for comparison with the Prairies was missed.

This book leaves the field open for a proper comparative study of urban development in the Canadian West. One hopes that British Columbia will receive greater attention in the next round, that a stronger analytical perspective will be brought to bear, and that an effort will be made to comprehend the development of the West after 1914. One tires of the anachronistic identification of the West with the Prairie farmer and his urban *confrères*, and this book does little to dispel the image.

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