

## Book Reviews

*The CPR West: The Iron Road and the Making of a Nation*, edited by Hugh A. Dempsey. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1984. Pp. 333, illus., index. \$24.95 cloth.

To commemorate the centennial of the arrival of the CPR in Fort Calgary the Glenbow Museum organized "The Great CPR Exposition" in 1983. Hugh Dempsey, an assistant director of the museum, invited a number of scholars to "explore the social and economic significance of the railway" at a well-publicized academic conference held at Banff to coincide with this exhibit. The fifteen publishable papers arising from that conference are reproduced in this volume.

The editor makes no attempt to integrate the separate pieces or sum up at the end. He simply identifies the authors and presents their papers. This is normally considered to be an abdication of editorial responsibility. Apart from appearing in rough chronological order, the papers bear no relation to one another. From the problem of oriental labour at the beginning to the 1939 Royal Tour at the end, the reader simply bounces about randomly wherever the curiosity of the participants alights.

If no particular theme or substance unites these papers apart from the thin line of the railroad, perhaps they are more closely related in style. Is there a way of writing western Canadian railroad history? The light editorial hand and the variety of contributors make this a suitable occasion to consider that question. Many of the senior scholars in the field of western history are represented (Dempsey, Jameson, Stanley); some less familiar names appear (Hart, Jones, Marsh, Mitchner), but the bulk of the freight is carried by academic historians in the upper ranks (Breen, den Otter, Eagle, Regehr, Roy and Stamp, with whom Kula and Foran might be associated).

As a rule these essays do not take a question as their point of departure; they are not conscious entries in any debate, nor do they venture any novel

interpretations themselves. Theory is never tested or used as a guide, nor are new methods attempted. Attention is fixed upon events and personalities — though sometimes groups — rather than trends, movements, forces or ideas. Essentially these papers are reports on documentary hordes based upon a commendable familiarity with all of the relevant surrounding primary sources. The typical document is a letter, departmental file, government report or newspaper item. Archival research is the hallmark of this kind of writing, as is the restricted focus, the narrative form and the reluctance to venture beyond simple summary statements.

The result is a curious historical literature which makes reference only to itself. One searches in vain in the extensive footnotes for evidence that anyone anywhere else has ever written about similar matters or that western Canadian issues could be illuminated by comparison with experience elsewhere. No other discipline or field of inquiry has anything useful to say, apparently. Western history is sufficient unto itself. The usual descriptive term for such work is antiquarianism.

No matter how new the evidence or novel the sources, not much can be made of a subject without some external reference point. The CPR may well have been at the forefront in all sorts of things; it may have been applying concepts developed elsewhere and modifying them for the western Canadian environment; it may have been simply another "case" of fairly uniform railroad behaviour. But we will never know from writing of this sort.

These general remarks having been made, exemptions must be granted to several contributors. A. A. den Otter conceives of the CPR's relationship to the western Canadian coal mining industry within a broader framework of the economics of the firm, and David Breen's essay on the early petroleum industry is cast in the wider framework of industrial development.

Most of the papers are well written, some have considerable charm and poignancy, and the publisher is to be congratulated on the handsome production, but one is left with the impression after reading these separate pieces that if we are to see the CPR in a new light we will need a good deal more than new documents.

*York University*

H. V. NELLES

*Stumped: The Forest Industry in Transition*, by Ken Drushka. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1985. \$14.95 paperback.

This is a controversial book which undoubtedly will ruffle some feathers. Nevertheless, it should be on the reading list of anyone who wishes to understand the complexities — and the realities — of forestry and the forest industry of British Columbia.

Ken Drushka is a writer (author of *Against the Wind and Weather: A History of Tugboating in British Columbia*) and former journalist who operates a custom sawmilling business on Vancouver Island. An Albertan who has lived and worked in B.C. since 1967, Drushka has been a logger, tree planter, firewatcher, silvicultural worker, fisherman and operator of the smallest commercial logging operation in British Columbia. From this down-to-earth perspective, he has written a provocative analysis of the British Columbia forest resource, which he portrays as a battlefield of competing interests where the real losers are future generations of British Columbians whose heritage is being squandered by an alliance of government, unions and business.

Clearly Drushka feels passionately about the state of B.C. forestry, but this book is far from being a mere exercise in polemics. In a comprehensive analysis he examines the history, theory, economics and institutional framework of contemporary forest management policy. His critique of the forest industry, of the provincial forest bureaucracy and of “intensive management” theory and practice and his scathing attack of successive generations of provincial politicians for the misuse of their political and economic stewardship will alarm both critics and supporters.

In successive chapters he asks: What kind of forests do we want? How did it all begin? What’s wrong with sustained yield? Who owns the trees? What is our timber worth? Will the supply last? Do we have a plan? Can silviculture solve our problems? What will the managed forest cost? Who runs the forests? What do we want from our forests? Do we have the answers? His answers will shock and dismay.

In his preface he asks the basic question, “What is the proper use of publicly owned forest?” With 94 percent of British Columbia forest land in the hands of the provincial government this is clearly a matter for public concern and is the reason why tenure is the most volatile issue in provincial resource politics.

He identifies, defines and discusses the problems of the transition from an era of forest liquidation to a future of conservative forest management

in the absence of a tradition of forest husbandry, noting that traditional silvicultural knowledge is lacking and that Pacific Northwest silviculture is an infant craft of which we know less than we do about the basic principles of horticulture. He remarks caustically that "we know less about the Douglas fir than we do about the chrysanthemum." He says that intensive forest management compares to traditional North American forestry as the growing of vegetables by modern agri-business compares to the activities of the casual weekend gardener, and he examines and attacks the policies and theories of B.C. forest management, arguing that while intensive management can yield incredible benefits, in its B.C. manifestation it is unpredictable and serves only to mollify the various political groups, the timber companies, the public, the environmentalists and the bureaucrats. The bureaucracy, he states, operates under a system whereby no one at an operational level is required to make a decision, and in both public and private sectors the nature of the organizational structure isolates everyone from the consequences of their actions. Decisions evolve out of process. The result is a system in which no one is quite responsible. Multiple land use is unworkable where valid concerns are lost in a bureaucratic morass of overlapping jurisdictions by ministries, branches and agencies. He sets out to show sustained yield, the keystone of forest policy, to be weak in theory and abused in practice. The "timber famine," to Drushka, is a myth: he points out that between 40 and 50 percent of the productive commercial forests have never been touched by loggers.

The point is not that intensive silviculture should not be practised, but that the entire question of silvicultural response should be treated with a great deal of scepticism until the results of treatments on specific sites are known. The danger is that convenient numbers may be dropped into convenient slots and everyone involved will pretend they know what they are doing. An example is the so-called allowable cut effect, whereby present-day yields are increased in expectation of future growth responses to cultural treatments. Drushka points out that consequent on our lack of a tradition of forest culture we have no experiential evidence for the supposed relationship between treatment and response. British Columbians have been cutters rather than growers.

The contrast is with the prairie farmers who work land settled by their great-grandparents: they owe much to academic theorists and to research plots, yet their greatest debt is to past generations, drawing on knowledge gained from the success and failures of their parents and their neighbours.

There is no such population of third or even second generation forest-farmers, and only a handful of first generation people who understand the arts and techniques of growing trees and tending forests. Although the academy, the research institute and various public and private bureaucracies have much to contribute, in the end silviculture will be created in the woods by people who live in the woods. We must find ways to build a tradition of silviculture which will evolve not out of strict enforcement of rules and regulations uniformly applied, but through the activities of creative people. To this end a stable indigenous rural work force and forest dwelling foresters must be developed rather than the present system when the bulk of forest work is performed, at great expense, by non-resident workers while foresters work at desks in centralized offices most often in cities.

This uncompromising look at the past and present state of B.C. forestry is followed by a challenging vision of the future. Drushka challenges British Columbians to look to the future of their forests, their timber resources, their fish and wildlife habitat, recreation values and watershed protection, and to develop tenures, administrative structures and silvicultural policies that address the needs and resolve the conflicts so that the forests may be better utilized and meet the real economic and social needs of the province.

The parallel is drawn with the effort of convincing a tribe of hunter/gatherers to invest their energies in tilling the soil. In anthropological terms such a transition brings about a "cultural shift" — a period of conflict for the individuals directly involved and for their society. Given the primitive state of silviculture, he suggests, it is not surprising that cultural conflicts are developing as we shift from a forest-cutting to a forest-farming economy, displacing so many habits, mind-sets and hallowed concepts.

Drushka concludes that "to receive all that our forests can give, we must restructure our forest industry, our tenure arrangements, our forest management and even — ourselves."

While one may disagree with individual parts of Drushka's highly personal brief, it is a must for the bookshelves of all concerned for the well-being of British Columbia's economic and social mainstay.

*Warriors of the North Pacific*, by Charles Lillard. Victoria, Sono Nis Press, 1984. Pp. 280. \$16.95.

Charles Lillard's *Warriors of the North Pacific* is a book with a mission. Lillard, who has contributed a number of articles and books on the Pacific Northwest, is convinced that historians have seriously misinterpreted the historic role of missionaries in the Pacific Northwest, particularly in the late nineteenth century, and has offered an edited volume of missionary accounts in an attempt to re-establish the reputation of these often maligned men of God. The clergy's records provide, he suggests, "the only eyewitness accounts of indigenous Indian life as the people travelled those horrendous last miles of their way from prehistory into the twentieth century." Other records, by journalists, government agents, ethnologists, travellers and historians, are flawed, Lillard argues, in that the authors did not live with the natives as long, or maintain as close contact, as did the missionaries.

*Warriors* consists of republished missionary memoirs and diaries, long out of print, that are filled with detailed descriptions of the native peoples of the Northwest Coast. "The North-West Coast," written by Rev. J. S. Green, recounts the American missionary's work in the region just north of Vancouver Island in 1826. The Methodist Thomas Crosby's "Among the An-ko-me-nums," released in 1907, describes his work at Nanaimo. The third selection, "Ancient Warriors of the North Pacific," is Charles Harrison's account of his work for the Church Missionary Society with the Haida, first published in 1925. The final entry consists of Bishop William Ridley's "Snapshots from the North Pacific," which covers his journeys among the natives in the Skeena, Stikine and Atlin districts between 1880 and 1900.

The four selections are rich in ethnohistorical detail and offer repeated evidence of the great attention paid by missionaries to the native societies they endeavoured to change. Lillard has selected missionary accounts which offer direct and extended commentaries on native societies and indicate the clergy's growing concern with the negative effects of the arrival of white men. It is here that the volume makes its most useful contribution. Lillard admits to some heavy-handed editorial decisions. None of the selections is included in its entirety. Major sections not related to mission work or, in several instances, covering areas outside the Pacific Northwest have been deleted. In the case of Ridley's contribution, two short articles were added to the original text to expand the story into

the headwaters of the Yukon River. Such major excisions from the original are sure to leave some readers uneasy. He does, however, provide a full description of his editorial imperatives and makes very clear his emphasis on missionary impressions of native people.

Though Lillard's primary purpose is to take these valuable manuscripts off the rare-book shelves and make them available again to a broad audience, there is an underlying historiographical motive behind the collection. In his introduction, the editor argues that historians have misread the role of missionaries in the changing condition of the native peoples of the Northwest Coast. In an interesting and far-ranging critique of work of Robin Fisher (*Contact and Conflict*) and Jean Usher (*William Duncan of Metlakatla*), Lillard boldly suggests that the historians have it all wrong.

Fisher's argument that "The missionaries demanded even more far-reaching transformation than the settlers and they pushed it more aggressively than any other group of whites" is dismissed as sophistic. Lillard comments that the work of Fisher and Usher demonstrates "an enviable dexterity when handling facts, though the way they fondle them is embarrassing." Usher's study of William Duncan is singled out for special criticism of its "near-complete lack of historical objectivity." These are strong words!

Unfortunately, there is little to back them up. Lillard lets the missionary accounts stand alone, suggesting that the common themes of native deprivation and missionary concern emerge strongly enough to convince the reader of his point. It is not enough. The introductions to the four selections are abnormally short, consisting of little more than thumb-nail sketches of the authors' lives and missionary careers. Annotations have been kept to the barest minimum. The result is that readers are on their own, without the much needed context, character assessments or supporting information necessary to assess the documents properly.

The net result is rather unfortunate. Lillard has issued a strongly worded challenge to historians, attacking both their analysis and intentions, without providing a substantial analysis of his own. It does not mean he is on the wrong track. Robin Fisher's description of the settlement frontier, in which, as Lillard points out, he generalizes from the experience of the lower mainland and Vancouver Island for the entire province, is probably in need of revision. The Northwest Coast is, as Lillard suggests, a good place to start. Similarly, his critique of Usher's analysis of William Duncan appears to have some merit. But he has gone

too far, rejecting historical analysis and arguing that we must return to the original documents to get a true sense of the personalities and events of this very traumatic time. *Warriors of the North Pacific* provides both an interesting example of the strength and importance of these often inaccessible missionary memoirs and an indication of the weakness inherent in allowing such documents to stand alone. Charles Lillard asks the right questions, and the missionary accounts republished here hold great potential for those in search of the answers, but his decision to forgo his own analysis, coupled with an as yet unsubstantiated rejection of existing historical scholarship, leaves a rather unsatisfying book.

*University of Victoria*

KEN COATES

*The War Against the Seals: A History of the North American Seal Fishery*, by Briton Cooper Busch. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985.

This book has a curious title. It is meant to convey the sense that man prepared himself to engage in the seal fishery with almost the same, often ritual, preparation that he reserved for war. What this book does — and it does it extremely well — is to document the history of the activity of seal hunting. Many readers will find this sufficient reason to read and enjoy this book.

As an analytic history of seal hunting in North American waters this book is unfortunately a failure. First, *The War Against the Seals* suffers from the fact that the Atlantic and Pacific seal fisheries are almost entirely unrelated, and the book's fragmentary nature is not helped by a separate section on hunting out of Boston. Both the Gulf of St. Lawrence harp seal fishery and the North Pacific fur seal hunt are covered from the first major exploitations to the present. The whole is an uneasy combination. Second, and most important, the author misses, or fails to develop, the major themes which make the history of the seal hunts of such contemporary interest: the complicated interrelatedness between the biology, the business and economics of sealing, and the broad politico-legal (and moral) issues raised.

Although the bibliography and preface contain reference to the biology of the seals, no use is made of this scientific evidence — notwithstanding the misleading claim on the dust jacket, itself wholly unworthy of a

university press. This points to several major problems. First, the life cycles of the various Atlantic and Pacific seals, their breeding habits and migrations are inadequately explained or ignored, leaving a misleading impression about what might be regarded as a reasonable level of predation when man insists on regarding seals as economic resources. Modern evidence also tells us that it is critical to consider at what stage of the life cycle harvesting takes place and that this is species-specific. Busch also repeats as fact what is often no more than nineteenth-century opinion about the biological effects of the seal hunts such as the assignment of responsibility for the rapid decline of the North Pacific fur seal herd to the Canadian pelagic sealers. The vast scientific output of Canada's Department of Fisheries — much of which is available in a highly readable form — is nowhere tapped, and, for instance, little appreciation is given of the inter-species biology (and economics) of the fish and seal populations of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, evidence I would have thought essential to understanding the politics and passions behind recent controversies.

The level of seal hunting might, of course, be expected to vary with price behaviour. Entry into and exit from the seal fishery by hunters was (and is) fairly swift; this means that biological re-adjustment may start almost immediately, providing that extinction levels have not been reached. The author fails to capture any historical or contemporary sense of why seal skins commanded a price and why that price varied, with the subsequent effect on the animal populations. One is left with the impression that any seal hunting imperils the seal populations, and that is most assuredly not true (except from certain moral positions — but they are not discussed either)!

It is a major disappointment that this book contains no reference to "property rights." The use of natural resources raises bio-economic issues about the appropriate level of exploitation, given certain goals of maintaining the resource stock at some predetermined level. Furthermore, if one harvester acts in a conserving manner he must be able to appreciate the rewards of his responsible management — and irresponsibility suitably punished — and that this will only prevail if there is less than open access to the fishery. Not only is this the stuff of most jurisdictional disputes about who gets to fish and who not, but in the case of the seal fishery it gave rise to major territorial controversies, as in the case of the Bering Sea dispute between Canada and the U.S. in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The diplomacy of the resolution of this conflict

is as much a part of the seal fishery as the sharpening of the harpoons. In most fisheries the new law-of-the-sea conventions allow for extended economic zones; this is a notion which first appears in the nineteenth-century seal fishery but regrettably does not appear in this book.

The author warns us in the introduction that he "is on the side of the seals." Unfortunately the book never quite loses this Greenpeace myopia, and a balanced historical perspective is never gained. The book is a severe disappointment although, as I have indicated above, it can be read with pleasure at the level of a simple narrative.

*University of British Columbia*

DONALD G. PATERSON

*Tales from the Canadian Rockies*, edited by Brian Patton. Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1984. Pp. xvi, 303.

Brian Patton has edited an extremely frustrating book. The almost eighty documents, both fictional and historical, which he has reproduced in whole or in part cover a wide range of experiences in the Canadian Rockies, from early Indian mythology to life in twentieth-century national parks. Most of these documents have been published previously, but often in sources not likely to be encountered by the general public, the target market of this book. Even for historians of the region there are bound to be items never before seen. Ranging in length from less than a page to about ten pages, the documents compiled here are often fascinating and informative first-hand accounts of life and travel in the Rockies. Each reader will undoubtedly find his own favourites, whether for the information contained or the beauty of the description. The moving fictional prose of Howard O'Hagan's *Tay John*, the clash of cultures and personalities described by Robert Campbell in "Edward Whympier" and David Thompson's account of his 1800 ascent of a mountain peak at the headwaters of the Bow River were personal highlights.

Unfortunately, the presentation detracts greatly from an appreciation of the material reproduced. The awkward format, the absence of an introduction to the volume and the omission of certain key documents prevent this chronologically arranged anthology from being "something of a documentary history of the Rockies," as the editor claims it to be. The acknowledgements providing the sources of the documents and the brief biographical sketches of the authors are at opposite ends of the book,

not with each document, thus necessitating constant flipping back and forth. There is a two and a half page preface but no introduction, no attempt at a general overview of the human history of the Rockies as a background to the documents. Explanations are provided with some documents, but sometimes these are inadequate. The note with the excerpt from Milton's and Cheadle's narrative of their trip across the Yellowhead Pass simply states, "By the 1860s travel across the Athabasca Pass had declined. . . ." There is no mention of the Hudson's Bay Company's reorganization of its transportation system and the abandonment of its transmountain brigade system as the reason for the decline in traffic on the Athabasca Pass, the company's most regularly used route. One suspects a lack of original research (apparently none in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives) and a less than full understanding of events prior to the arrival of the CPR to account for the inadequate background information and, also, the omission of certain documents. Never previously published, the colourful description of the first documented crossing of the Yellowhead Pass and the detailed report of the first telegraph survey of that route might be expected to be included. However, neither James McMillan's 1825 explorations guided by the legendary Tête Jaune nor John Rae's 1864 expedition are even noted.

The editor claims that the documents were "selected to entertain." Regrettably, especially because of the editor's obvious love for his subject, some of their entertainment value and historical significance have been lost in this volume.

*Parks Canada*

DAVID SMYTH

*Ocean/Paper/Stone: The Catalogue of an exhibition of printed objects which chronicle more than a century of literary publishing in British Columbia*, compiled by Robert Bringhurst. Vancouver: William Hoffer, 1984.

The exhibition documented in this catalogue was held at Vancouver's M. C. Duthie Gallery in April/May 1984. But Bringhurst's book is far more than a catalogue: an elegant design makes it an example of fine printing in its own right; it is a descriptive bibliography of remarkable thoroughness (documenting typefaces, designers, bindings, papers and press runs); it gives capsule histories (often anecdotal) of over sixty

imprints and of nearly forty periodicals published in British Columbia since the arrival of the first printing press in 1856. It also lists some twenty publishers and thirty literary periodicals not represented in the exhibition.

Relatively invisible since its publication (perhaps because of its occasional origins), *Ocean/Paper/Stone* should be in the library of anyone interested in B.C. studies. Pulled from the reference shelf, it provides a handy list of evocative trivia: first ethnographic publication (a *Dictionary of Indian Tongues*, 1862), first literary publication (*Sawney's Letters: or Cariboo Rhymes*, 1866, by the Scots prospector James Anderson), first work of fiction (*Three Letters of Credit and Other Stories*, 1894, by Arthur Hodgins Scaife), or first literary work by a woman (Lily Alice Lefevre, *The Lion's Gate and Other Verses*, 1895). As cultural history, the book provides a startling sense of how thoroughly early literary publishing was tied up with religion and the church; it suggests how anti-Oriental racist tracts masqueraded as literature in the 1920s; it remembers Fr. Adrien-Gabriel Morice setting his own type and doing his own printing in three languages, 500 kilometres from the nearest post office; it emphasizes repeatedly how talented typographers and designers subtly shape a community's sense of itself.

Literate and literary in its own right, Bringhurst's text is perhaps most valuable — certainly most entertaining — when it allows itself a gnomic and puckish suggestion about cultural definition. Charles Morriss he salutes for his extraordinary contribution to book publishing in British Columbia, but of his text face, Baskerville (which you are at the moment reading), he can only lament: "an eighteenth-century rationalist letter well suited to period books about the European exploration and colonization of this coast, but wholly out of keeping with the spirit of twentieth-century literature" (pp. 22-23). Minor books by young B.C. writers may be published in the home province, Bringhurst notes, "but important books by these writers . . . are published in the East" (p. 13). Tucked into Bringhurst's account of the Vancouver Public Library's very limited publication activity is this shrewd comment: "Clearly some poets should study botany (and fewer, perhaps, should study mere literature)" (p. 73). Those writers most continuously in touch with botany, the native poets and storytellers, Bringhurst recognizes "are the standard, or the shadow of the standard, against which our impudent immigrant literature must stand. They are what remains to us of the ahistorical culture, a

culture of ridges and valleys instead of fads, of season and place instead of time" (pp. 15-16).

This combination of polish and passion makes Bringhurst's book the best literary history of British Columbia available (not a crowded field, to be sure). "It is a poet's business," he writes, "to say for his people where they have come from and why they are where they are. It is also his business to root with language, himself and his people into the world." Although he sees these aims, in an immigrant culture such as British Columbia's, to be "generally at odds," Bringhurst's delicate fusion of ocean, paper and stone makes his book a fine exception.

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LURIE RICOU